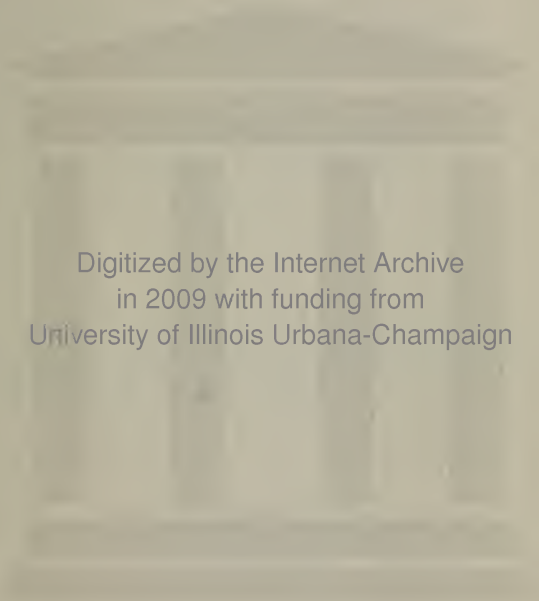


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MARY LYNDSAY.

BY

THE LADY EMILY PONSONBY,

AUTHOR OF

“THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE,”

“KATHERINE AND HER SISTERS,”

&c., &c.

“How much we love God, how submissive we are to God’s will, we cannot otherwise than by willingly undergoing or patiently bearing afflictions, well express; without it no sore trial of virtue can be; without it no excellent example of goodness had ever been.”—BARROW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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MARY LYNDSAY.

CHAPTER I.

“ Oh ! grief—beside the stream of holy love
To stand, and mark its everlasting flow,
Its laughing leaps, its murmurs sweet and low,
Its bordering flowers, its glory from above
Yet feel that thine own home for ever stands
Amidst the desert sands.”

W. S. WALKER.

THE slight improvement which had taken place in the relations of Mary and her husband lasted through another day. No advance was made, but it maintained its ground

Happy to have some new subject to

she told him of her visit to the Davis's, and casually asked how he supposed Mr. Davis had "got on so fast," as Mrs. Davis had expressed it.

It was a question addressed to the very heart of the singular man to whom she spoke. His countenance changed and lighted, and he rose in his chair and stooped forward to answer her. When a man speaks with interest, it is impossible not to listen with interest, and Mary's attention was caught and carried away as he described to her in vivid, glowing terms, the hopes, and fears, and ventures of a merchant's life.

It was not till the tale was finished, and he, becoming conscious of and half ashamed of the excitement he had shown, drew back and resumed his newspaper, that Mary also shrank back and shud-

dered. Shuddered at this revelation of the mind of her husband. His love of money had of late escaped her memory; he was so liberal to herself, so just in his household, so liberal towards Frank and to her father, that she had forgotten the hateful passion that had once absorbed him. The feverish gleam of his eyes during his late speech, revealed the still living and breathing passion, and she shuddered. For a moment her thoughts turned in pity towards him and *his* welfare; she felt that to her it was entrusted to make war with the disease; but the love of money was very hateful to her; she sighed as she thought of the task before her; and with the sigh her thoughts relapsed again with an aching longing to the remembrance of the one being in whom her soul had found sympathy.

That longing she struggled with ; but it was Alan of whom her thoughts were full, and it was Alan's welfare which replaced the momentary pity for Mr. Merivale. During these days when she had been busy for Frank's pleasure, that reckless, despairing face was ever pursuing her ; she had still felt that unless shortly assured of his well-being, the burden of life would be insupportable.

Her sense of duty kept her from visits to Mrs. Clifton, where she might meet with him, and from inquiries of which he might be told ; but Mrs. Clifton and Alan thought of her, and very shortly her anxiety was relieved.

It was on the evening of the third day since Alan's visit that a note was brought her. She and Mr. Merivale were as usual alone. There had not been many words between them, but the few there

had been had been peaceful ones. Mary was working; hard at work on a bright-coloured pattern to make a cushion for her mother's back. Mr. Merivale was busy with his unceasing newspapers; but now and then his eyes stole towards Mary, as if the sight of her in her pretty evening dress, and even the bright wools on which her fingers were employed, were soothing to him.

The note was brought in, the servant saying, "It was left by Mrs. Clifton's carriage, and she will call to-morrow."

If Mary's eyes turned eagerly towards it, more eagerly still Mr. Merivale watched her eagerness and her countenance as she read. He could see a gradual change, he could see and feel a flash of gladness pass over it, and he watched on with the suspicion of a jealous mind, and the anguish of an unloved one.

Mary twice read the note, then looked up and met the gaze fastened upon her. She blushed and hesitated, glanced again at her letter, again hesitated, and then blushing, and timidly, held out the note towards him.

“It is a note from Mrs. Clifton, telling me what I am glad to hear.”

He would have given the world to be able to refuse this mark of innocent confidence, but he could not. The relief in her countenance was so great, that great as that relief was the imperative longing to know its cause. He held out his hand and read :—

“MY DEAREST MARY.

“I know you will be as glad as I am to hear that a friend of ours has come to his senses, and done the only wise thing in his power, that is to leave London and go to his uncle.

I could not, although I guessed you would be anxious, write to tell you this until I was certain he was actually off. I went, therefore, to his lodgings this afternoon, and heard from the elderly lady who keeps them that he not only was gone, but had given up his lodgings, telling her he did not intend to return at present. I hope therefore that he is out of harm's way, and that all will end well. You have been a sad truant, but I guessed your reason. God bless you, dear Mary, and be happy.

“Your affectionate friend,

“M. CLIFTON.

Now there were many comforting and comfortable thoughts to be gathered from this letter. Alan was gone, and Mary was glad he was gone. He was not only gone for a time, but he did not intend to return. Mary had so little sought

to see him, that she had not gone to her only friend lest she should see him. These and other reflections Mr. Merivale might have made, but if he had had power to make them, what were they to him? He never doubted Mary's truth and duty. What he did doubt was her affection, and too convincingly clear did this note make it, that her affection, her anxiety, had been following Alan. As he slowly read, drinking his misery in, his eyes glanced over the past days, beginning at Mary's pale looks, and ending with his own vain and idle hopes; and as he made his survey and drew his deductions, he laid the letter down and said coldly, contemptuously, and in the bitterness of his disappointed heart, insolently,

“You take a warm interest in that young man's welfare!”

He had scarcely spoken before he would

have sacrificed thousands of his precious gold to recall his words, for in Mary's face there was an expression that made his heart shiver; an expression that told him he had forfeited his last hope of gaining her love.

Could Mary have read that poor heart, and appreciated its disappointment, she might, she must have pitied it; but he himself had repelled her sympathy, and he felt the fruits of that repelling. She thought of all that had passed, of all she had sacrificed, of all she had suffered; and the insult of his words stung her,—(not beyond human endurance, for some more perfect in heavenly charity might have borne),—but beyond *her* power to bear. A tear, not a soft one, flashed in her eye, and though she said not one word, volumes could not have spoken the keen and cutting reproach which her one glance gave.

Nothing more passed. In his secret soul Mr. Merivale implored her pardon; but his outward act was to push the note towards her, to resume his newspaper, and suffer in silence.

As Mary took back the note, and replaced it in its envelope, her indignation, the moment's expression of her wounded feelings, died away; and after an instant she tore it up, and threw it into a basket at her feet; then returned to her work, and worked on again industriously.

But no more glances stole towards her; the very tearing of the letter irritated him, and when the servant entered again with a letter, this time addressed to him, he accepted the relief from his wife's society with a feeling of rapture, and without a look or word left her to herself.

Mary sighed for a moment, but Mr. Merivale was right; he *had* forfeited his

hope of her love. Perhaps the feeling had been silently growing of late, and this last provocation only set its seal upon a gradual change; but certainly from this time he lost much of his power to wound, from the simple fact that she was growing indifferent.

The relief regarding Alan was so great, so excessive, that in the rebound from her anxiety concerning his moral welfare, a feeling almost of happiness sprang up; and this, combined with her growing indifference to her husband's ill-temper, led her into a new life. With the elasticity of youth, with the elasticity of a sweet temper and large powers of enjoyment, she now looked about her, and endeavoured to make the best of her sad lot. She began to occupy herself with many things. Frequent visits to Mrs. Clifton to a certain degree introduced her into society, and Mrs. Clifton's friends, charmed with her beauty and sense, and winning manners,

sought her in her own home, far as it was from the common haunts of the fashionable world.

And at Mrs. Clifton's, where society of all kinds assembled, and all kinds of topics were discussed, Mary became aware of her deficiencies, and a thirst for knowledge was kindled in her heart.

She began to read. She wrote to her father for advice, and read steadily; she noted down the books of lighter literature that she heard mentioned, and read them with avidity. It was a new phase in her history, a new starting point in her existence, and her mind opened as a flower opens to the light.

She followed up also her acquaintance with Mary Davis, to the surprise of the family, selecting her as the object of her notice. The extreme youth and freshness of the young girl cheered her sad heart and

gratified her longings to give pleasure. To give her pleasure, Mary visited many sights and scenes which otherwise would have been unvisited; and thus, too, her mind gained food for thought and conversation, and she was becoming fitter to live in the world of life.

Occupation also of a very different kind was thrust upon her; thrust upon her first, then eagerly seized and followed out.

The clergyman of the parish in which Mary lived was one of those rare men who observe, and who not only observe, but who draw deductions from what they see.

From the first Sunday on which Mary and Mr. Merivale set their foot in his crowded church, he had noticed them; the sad-faced but lovely young wife; the grave and gloomy husband. There was an old Merivale pew situated beneath the

pulpit ; for many years it had been let, but immediately on his marriage Mr. Merivale regained possession of it, and to this pew he, with Mary, Sunday after Sunday bent his steps.

Having once noticed, the clergyman watched them. He could see that one thought alone possessed the husband's mind ; that whether it were prayer, or praise, or instruction, he worshipped only, heeded only, the being at his side. He could see that far otherwise was it with the sad, sweet face that was lifted up to *him* as *his* words issued above their heads. He could see how she hung upon those words as if they were her life ; how at times, if he spoke of the world's disappointments, and the comforts of trust in God, the muscles of her face would quiver and her eyelids droop lest a tear should fall.

He noted, and after a time—for time with him was a thing that almost existed not—he called upon her.

And here again began another phase in the history of her mind. Hitherto her passion to do good had been confined to her home, or those near her. Her youth, her shrinking from suffering, her occupations at home, had all prevented a spreading charity; but when seeing, reading as he did the secret cares and sorrows of her mind, the clergyman invited her help in some of his many avocations, her heart leapt up to meet his wishes; and that one visit he paid secured him an assistant whose very countenance invited confidence, softened rudeness, won love, and whose heart required only to see need to bestow help—all the help that was in her power.

Thus, then, Mary was fully occupied, and thus she fought with the troubles of

her home and the sorrows of her heart. It was certainly wise ; it was certainly good ; and yet . . .

At this time of her life, when more occupied with active charity, when doing more actual good than she ever had done in life before, there was less real charity burning in Mary's heart than at any time since her earliest childhood. There was one spot over which a callous matter was growing, stifling its soft impulses ; it was that spot which Mr. Merivale's image occupied. She still most faithfully and pertinaciously endeavoured to do her duty to him. She asked his leave for every new occupation she undertook ; she mentioned to him every fresh acquaintance she made ; and she even sometimes asked his help in the larger charities, a larger acquaintance with the needs of London required. The faithful performance of these and other im-

posed duties blinded her eyes to the change in her feelings, but *he* felt the change. He could see that her cheek no longer flushed, nor her lip trembled, if his words were repellent and harsh; he could see that, if more than usually morose, she did not sink in despair as once she had done, but endeavoured to divert her thoughts. Indifference to his moods was growing up. She was unconscious of the fact, but *he* felt it.

Yet Mary was not happy in her indifference—happy with her occupations—happy with her duties. Her cares did divert the surface of her mind, but sorrow, and regret, and disappointment preyed at heart. She was less dejected than she had been when thoughts only of submission occupied her, but she was far less at peace.

“Why *does* your sister always look so sad?” Mary Davis asked, one evening, when Frank was honouring her with some attention. “She has almost everything she can wish for, and yet she always looks sad.”

“You had better ask her,” Frank replied, not knowing what to say.

“Oh! Mr. Lyndsay, you do not think I would be so impertinent! I only ask you because it makes me unhappy. She tries to make others happy, but she never looks happy herself. I often think her smile is the saddest thing of all.”

“I suppose, Miss Davis, there are a great many things in married life that we unmarried people know nothing about.”

“Perhaps; but . . . but I won’t ask anything more if I had better not.”

“Oh! pray ask anything you please, only don’t expect *me* to understand women’s

hearts." Frank spoke with some acrimony.

Miss Davis blushed, and said no more.

"Well, now," Frank continued, after a moment, "*you* have said a thing to-day that surprised me. I didn't know *you* thought so much about money."

"Me," said his young companion, with a slight scream.

"Yes; you say Mary has got everything a woman can wish for. What do you mean that she has got except money? What do you know of Mr. Merivale? What do you know about her home?"

"She has got beauty, and the power of making *everybody* like her! and that is having all she can wish."

"I thought you meant money, like the rest of the world," he said, and he proceeded to converse in a mollified tone.

It will be perceived, perhaps, that Frank Lyndsay had been in some way disap-

pointed, and though no great interest is expected in his affairs, they must be mentioned.

He did not speak of Mrs. Larpent for some weeks; and though Mary made many attempts to draw him on, he resisted them.

At the end of three or four weeks, however, he voluntarily said:—

“Well, Mary, I went to tea in Gloucester Terrace, and I have been there several times,” and then he stopped.

“Well, Frank.”

“Well, and I agree with you. I don’t like that woman.”

Mary could scarcely refrain from an expression of thankfulness, but she saw he looked annoyed, and did refrain. “It was what I expected to happen,” she merely said.

“Well, Mary, it shows your discern-

ment, I own. She's not like the same woman. I never could have believed money could change a woman to that degree. But I suppose it's the same all the world over."

He spoke so bitterly, that Mary began to suspect some rival had appeared.

"But, Frank," she asked hesitatingly, "is there . . . surely I am not mistaken in thinking she likes you still?"

"Likes me. Oh! yes," he said, drawing himself up. "I believe she does. She's very ready to jump down my throat *now*. But that's one of the things that disgust me. I didn't expect any sentiment about poor Larpent; I didn't wish for it. I should have thought her a hypocrite if she had put it on; but there is such a thing as decency and propriety, at least to my mind there ought to be. However," he

continued, after a moment, "I think perhaps I should have forgiven that. You know there are causes; and if she has always liked me why, you know, Mary, some people can't help showing what they feel."

"Then what is it?"

"It's the woman herself. You wouldn't know it was the same woman as Louisa Davis. So set up with airs! Now if there is one thing that in my humble opinion a man can't stand, it's airs in a woman. I, at least, will never stand them, and so Mrs. Larpent may keep her money to herself, or give it to whoever she pleases."

"What shall you do then, Frank? Shall you have to give up going to the Davis's? I am sorry for that."

"Oh, no; there is no need, Mrs. Larpent and I are very good friends. I

took care to be discreet, because, after what you said, I fancied it possible she might be changed. We met only as friends, and though she makes advances, thinking I am diffident, I don't seem to notice them. A man with his wits about him knows how to act in such matters ; and besides, after what you said about that other girl, I have been paying some attention to her. I don't mean matrimonial attentions, I only mean I have been trying to find out if what you say about *her* was true."

"Well?" Mary asked, smiling.

"Well, Mary, I think she's a good useful girl, and might make a man a comfortable wife. I don't mean to speak of anything more at present. Only as I am quite determined not to be disappointed in my wishes again, I thought it right to ascertain whether Mr. Davis

gives any fortune to his daughters, and I find he does, £5,000. Now if I should turn my thoughts that way, and if I should rise as I intend to do, I think £5,000 will make it not so foolish an affair. What do you say ?”

“I think I could live on very little with a person I liked, dear Frank; and I think if people will be content to be happy, and not try to be grand, a very little is enough.”

Frank saw a flush on her cheek as she spoke, and after a moderate acquiescence in her opinion, discreetly changed the subject.

“There’s only one thing more, Mary. If that girl should ever be my wife I *will not* have her called Polly; and I don’t see what is to be done.”

“There will be no need,” Mary said, laughing. “It is kind to let Mrs. Davis call her Polly, but she can be Mary to you.”

“Oh! no, indeed. *You* are my Mary. I won’t have any other.”

The speech was so totally free from sentiment, that Mary, though her heart bounded at the affection it betrayed, restrained herself from any expression of gratitude, simply assuring him that something would suggest itself, if ever the necessary decision came. But when, after Frank’s departure, she sat alone, she could not but feel grateful and thankful for the power she had gained over him. It was her words which had swayed him; had led to a wise decision, and might lead to a happy choice for the future; and she told herself with tears that she ought not to repine while such

trust and such affection were hers. She ought not; and yet the days and weeks passed on, and Mary still was sad.

CHAPTER II.

“The voice which I did more esteem
Than music in her sweetest key,
Those eyes which unto me did seem
More comfortable than the day;
Those now by me, as they have been
Shall never more be heard or seen.”

S. WITHER.

THE weeks and months went by. It was September ; nearly five months since Mary's marriage. Nearly five months, and she had not yet seen her parents. A strange reluctance on both sides prevented this meeting, though always, in almost

every letter it was talked of, and looked forward to. Letters, presents, thoughts, went unceasingly from Mary's new home to her old one, but she could not make the effort to return to it. She dreaded her father's silent gaze; she dreaded still more her mother's questionings. She had of late so hid her thoughts under a calm exterior, that she shrank with terror from facing them, or having them faced, and so, on her part, the visit was not paid. The reluctance on the part of Captain Lyndsay was still greater. He enjoyed the comforts Mary's riches sent; and, warned in his secret soul that the price paid was the earthly happiness of his child, he dared not see the wreck he had made; he dared not know what yet he knew too well. He too, therefore, spoke daily, weekly, of running up to see her, or sending Mrs. Lyndsay, but the deed

was not done. In the constant hope of going, Mrs. Lyndsay lived; over the constant disappointment, grumbled; but she was far too indolent to take a step herself. Well dressed, in a warm room, and a comfortable arm-chair, she peacefully passed her life; and though she thought it was quite impossible Mary could be happy with Mr. Merivale, now that young man was alive, still *she* was so comfortable that she hoped it was so.

But what Mary had not the resolution to do for herself was at this time settled for her. In the beginning of September she caught a bad cold, and when the cold was cured she did not recover. The effects of those five months' secret sorrow now appeared. A languor, which she vainly endeavoured to shake off, settled upon her. Her eyes were heavy, and her nights restless. There was no

apparent cause of illness, and yet she was ill.

Mr. Merivale had thought but little of the cold. All men and women have colds, and when the cold was gone, he expected recovery, and felt no anxiety. It was suddenly, as on a former occasion, that his eyes fell on Mary's face, and observed the change. The black lines under the eyes; the blue veins in her transparent skin; and once again, with a pang indescribable, the thought shot through his brain that Mary would die.

On this occasion, however, the emotion was subdued. He was too convinced of Mary's indifference to hazard a word of anxiety, and he waited to speak until he could speak with the measured coldness he had imposed on himself in his relations with her.

When he could trust himself, he spoke.

"It is a foolish thing, Mary, to throw away health. I do not think you have recovered from your cold."

"I don't think I have," she replied, with a faint smile.

The smile was so faint, so sad, he could scarcely subdue the aching of his heart, but the remembrance why she was sad, was ever ready to thrust itself on his notice, and it came now and calmed him.

"I shall send for Dr. ———," he went on, "I hear him very highly spoken of. At what time will it suit you to see him?"

"I will be at home at any time that suits him, or that you please," she replied, gently ; and then, after a moment, "Thank you for thinking of it. I was beginning to feel that I ought to see some one."

“ Why did you not speak ? ” he said, reproachfully.

In reproach there is feeling, and Mary was touched. It was rarely that the veil of impenetrable reserve was lifted from that stony manner, and insensibly she felt warmed and cheered. “ I have only just began to feel it,” she said, with a more ready smile, “ and I don’t think there is much the matter. Perhaps I want fresh air.”

His countenance fell. Yes, that was it. Mary wanted separation from *him*. He said no more, however, except to observe that he would let her know at what hour to expect Dr. —, and left her.

In a different tone did he address the physician to whom he went, and the representation he made of his wife’s health, and the anxiety of mind exhibited, led Dr. — to appoint an hour that same

day. A note was sent to Mary, and she was ready.

Unable to find any sufficient cause for her impaired health, the Physician asked her, with anxious interest and steadfast gaze, if she had anything upon her mind. It was not a difficult question to answer, but Mary felt guilty. She blushed deeply, and remained silent.

It was no business of her medical adviser to inquire further. He was perplexed, but he was answered. That anxious husband, that sad-looking wife, that sweet ingenuous countenance, that guilty yet guileless blush! What it could mean he could not understand, but he could understand the cause of her failing health. He prescribed country air, and as much air as possible. "Was she willing to obey him?" "Most willing," she said,

smiling, and the smile was so innocent that his half-drawn conclusions were put to flight.

According to his promise he called on Mr. Merivale at the Bank, assured him there was no cause for serious uneasiness, but at the same time that there was such evident languor of body and mind, that fresh air and change of scene were absolutely necessary.

Mr. Merivale heard him with outward calm, with inward despair. It was come then, to this. His presence killed her, and they must part. This was the beginning of the end. Mary must either die or be torn from him. His hard-won treasure must be given up.

After the physician left him he walked madly about his room, then sent word to Mary that he was busy and could not return to dinner. He could not face the

long evening with her alone. He felt he could not hide his despair.

It was late when he entered the drawing-room; but by that time he had composed himself. He sat down in a chair by the fire, and Mary asked him if he had dined.

He made no answer to that question, but nerving himself began, "Dr. —— recommends, as you imagined, country air. Where do you intend to go?"

"Will you not come with me?" Mary said, timidly."

"No. I am too much engaged."

Her question had surprised him, and he hoped it would be repeated, but it was not. He had spoken roughly, and Mary was afraid to say more.

"Where do you intend to go?" he asked, again.

For a moment a longing to return as

a daughter to her own home flashed before Mary's eyes, and made her heart beat. To return to her old occupations, alone and free! to be herself again! The momentary picture was like a picture of Paradise, and though, so fast do human beings change their tastes, it was possible Mary would not have found the reality as enchanting as she supposed, yet it was with a sigh that it was driven away. It was put aside, however, and with dutiful impulse she replied:—

“My father's house is too small for us. If Miss Merivale will have me, I think I had better go to Cleeve.”

That word *us*! Mr. Merivale was for a moment melted in grateful tenderness. She did not wish, then, to separate herself from him.

“Catherine will be only too happy,” he said, softly.

“I cannot call her Catherine,” Mary said, with half a smile, fancying a reproof, or at least a comment on the name she had used, “she is so much older and better than I am, so much above me in every way.”

The jealous and suspicious are never pleased. Mr. Merivale was displeased at Mary’s half-playful apology.

“She thinks me a tyrant,” he thought.

Aloud he said gravely—

“Catherine does not care for such outward forms. Neither do I care for them.”

But he spoke untruly, for had her soft voice once called him Hubert, he would have been beside himself with rapture.

Mary was abashed, and made no further remark. She had the sweetness of temper that forbears with all, but not the spirit that fights with all.

The gleam of sunshine was overclouded, but still the storm of the day was passed. That word *us* lingered in Mr. Merivale's ear like music, and drove away despair. After a short silence he desired Mary to write to Miss Merivale, adding that he would send a messenger down in the early morning.

"She will then be prepared," he said, "by the following day. Dr. —— says there must be no delay."

Mary obeyed; wrote to her and to her mother, and now that this meeting with her parents was become a certainty and a necessity, that which she had no courage to propose became an object and a delight.

The mere thought of the change, the mere preparations necessary before the change, roused Mary from her languor. It was a simple and natural effect, which

all might have expected in such a case. But the jealous eyes that watched Mary had no thought of simple and natural effects. *They* saw the change and shuddered. When the day of separation came, Mr. Merivale could not face the parting. He had a presentiment in his mind that Mary was leaving his house never to re-enter it, and he could not answer for his self-control. He left her in the morning with a promise to return to see her off; but instead of returning he sent a messenger to say that business prevented his return.

Mary sighed; but hushed the sigh. She had not expected this last neglect; but it was but a part of his usual conduct, and she diverted her thoughts from the sorrows of her home as best she was able. On this day it was no difficult task. The fresh air, the green fields,

and as she neared Cleeve, the remembrance of each familiar object worked her up into ecstasy, and till the carriage stopped at the gate of Cleeve, she was Mary Lyndsay again. The sight of that gate, the gloomy avenue, the melancholy mansion sobered her, and she was Mrs. Merivale when she drove up to the door.

In her desire to do all that was most right, she had decided on going straight to Cleeve, and she was expected there. She had said at four o'clock, and punctual Miss Merivale stood at the door to receive her.

The greeting was kind. If there was not much show in it, there was a softness and reality that Mary felt. She had dreaded inquiring eyes; but though the eyes did look searchingly, there was gentleness in the gaze. Miss Merivale said nothing of her brother; but inquired

with interest into Mary's health, and expressed regret at her pale looks.

The house at Cleeve was little changed. Some painting and repair had been necessary; but all that had been done had been done in so sober a style, that the novelty scarcely caught the eye. A remembrance of Mary's tastes, however, Miss Merivale had shown. There was a pot of fresh flowers on the drawing-room table, and the room chosen for her had a south-west aspect, and sunshine, therefore, more or less, all the day.

"I hope you will be comfortable, Mary," she said, kindly, "I would have made better preparations if I had had more time. And now you must be wishing to see your father. We dine at seven; till then I will leave you free. I begged your father and mother to come here, but they would not. They wished

to have you all to themselves. Can you walk as far as your cottage?"

"Oh, yes," Mary said, eagerly springing up, and she set off.

She set off at the pace in which she had been accustomed to hurry from the gloom of Cleeve to her home. The old pace came as by intuition ; but the change in Mary's strength was soon apparent. She stopped breathless, and slowly and languidly made the rest of the way.

At the little garden gate the old fit returned, and with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes she flew into the house, and into her parents' arms. For that moment she looked like herself ; but the excitement over, the colour faded, the light in her eyes died away, and she stood before them in her new self.

"Why, my good gracious me, Mary, how changed you are!" cried her mother,

after the first greetings had left her free to observe.

Her father silently gazed at her; Mary's colour rose as she cast down her eyes. This was the moment she had so dreaded. Her parents must see that she did not love her husband.

Captain Lyndsay turned away and walked to the window. In that moment the iron entered into his soul. In vain had Frank repeated that Mary was not happy; in vain had been Mary's own letters, so wanting in joyousness; he heard, but would not believe. Now he saw and felt. The time was come.

"I shall soon be well down here," Mary said, rallying her courage. "I want fresh air."

"Ah! if it is only that," replied her mother, gazing anxiously at her; "but, my dear Mary, that was a dreadful

thing that poor young man being alive. I am sure you must have felt it!"

Again Mary guiltily hung down her head. There was a sound of annoyance, a kind of smothered "hush" from the window, and then Captain Lyndsay walked out of the room, and slammed the door.

Relieved, and better able to deal with her mother, Mary again took courage and said steadily—

"Dear mother, you do not think I wished him dead!"

"No, my dear Mary, of course not. I only mean to say that as he is alive, it must have been very difficult to love Mr. Merivale. At least, I am sure I should have found it so."

"Mr. Merivale is my husband, mother," Mary said, sternly. "I *must* love him."

“ Oh yes ! don’t suppose I forget that ! I only think—well, perhaps we had better talk of something else. Oh, my dear Mary, how glad I am to see you, and now I can thank you for all your presents.”

“ Oh ! mother, it is such pleasure to send them ; and I have brought you a new gown, a dark silk, with a bright flower on it. That is what you like, is it not ?”

“ I like it of course, Mary, and it is a great thing to be so rich ; but do you know,” in a very vexed tone, “ I can *not* wear out my gowns ? This is your wedding silk. I put it on for to-day ; and though it is such a beautiful lavender, I cannot spoil it. It always looks as good as new.”

“ But you will come and see me in London, mother, in the winter ; and then

you will want a new silk, you know."

"Ah! perhaps. They dress very well in London, I hear. And how nicely you are dressed, Mary dear! Does Mr. Merivale like to see you look nice, and have pretty gowns?"

"Frank does, mother," Mary said, escaping from her questioning. "I have so much to tell you about Frank. But my father—won't he come back, mother?"

"I dare say he will. I don't think he quite liked what I said about that poor young man; but I should have died if I had not said it. Shall I go and call him?"

"We will go, mother." And Mary went and knocked at her father's door.

He bid her come in, and she hastened

to draw a newspaper—the day's paper—from her pocket ; it had been placed there for his special pleasure. Armed with this, she felt able to face him, and he, in the moment's excitement, forgot to think of her.

Although it was the month of September, there was some foreign news of interest, and Captain Lyndsay read it aloud, then said, "But you don't care, Mary, for such things, I know."

"Yes, father, I do," she replied, and she told him some remarks she had heard made at Mrs. Clifton's on the subject, a short time before.

He listened, and commented, and again she spoke ; and then from the interest of the subject his mind reverted to the change in his child. The change excited wonder ; so open was her mind ; so ready her speech.

But the subject dropped, and the animation of an instant faded from her counte-

nance, and again he saw the bruised if not broken heart beneath ; and deeper still sank the iron into his soul.

CHAPTER III.

“ I am a plant, whose leaves are cropped,
Whose pleasant fruit is plucked away,
Whose hopeful branches down are lopped
And left without a living spray.”

S. WITHER.

MARY and Miss Merivale got on extremely well together. The novelty of a guest at Cleeve, and the charm, which even in their depressed state, Mary's manners cast about her, spurred Miss Merivale to exertion. She was interested in Mary's health, and in her

desire to improve her health, endeavoured also, in her own sad way, to please. But though there were these reasons, the real cause which made companionship between them possible, was the change in Mary's self. Miss Merivale's sad tales of the world's sorrows, and sad reflections on the world's sins, fell now on no heedless ear. In the trials through which Mary had passed, she had not only made acquaintance with sorrow, but she had made an acquaintance which exercises a more powerful influence on the character. She had learned the force of temptation and the weakness of human nature. Her sympathy, therefore, at this moment, followed with even morbid attraction, tales of suffering and temptation; not for the tales themselves, but for the practical lesson imparted; how they had been borne, and how best man can learn to bear them. On this theme Miss Merivale spoke *con amore*,

and Mary listened and received her lessons into her heart.

These conversations were confined to leisure moments. Miss Merivale's life was a life of charity ; charity at home and charity abroad ; and to all her occupations Mary gave now her willing help ; working for her, planning with her, and visiting the sick who were under her charge. Miss Merivale was not insensible to the charm of help and sympathy ; such hearty help as Mary's ; and she actually began to love her and to permit herself to love her, with an impulsive human love.

Thus Mary's days passed rapidly along ; the mornings she gave to Miss Merivale ; the afternoons to her parents ; and the air, and the freedom, and the affection and sympathy she met, raised her spirits and improved her health. The evenings she spent with Miss Merivale alone, and those conversa-

tions took place which have been mentioned. On these occasions Miss Merivale read passages from various authors to enforce her words; passages from biographies, from essayists, even at times from poets, and the soft monotony of her reading, and the calm sadness of the truths she presented, lulled Mary's mind into tranquillity.

In London, the struggle to seem gayer than she was, had exhausted her. In London the contrast of the whirl of gaiety around, had made the weight on her life press more heavily. There was perhaps a danger in the soft melancholy of Miss Merivale's abode; an equal danger, though in a contrary direction; but at the moment it soothed her. Nothing jarred; nothing spoke of a gladness beyond her reach; all on the contrary spoke of the littleness of human trials in the light of eternity. After such evenings,

wearied in body but quiet in mind, Mary slept profoundly, and under the influence of peaceful days and peaceful nights her vigour of body began to return.

A fortnight and some days had passed when one morning Mr. Merivale appeared.

Mary and Miss Merivale were in the drawing-room at work, when he suddenly entered.

He paused at the door for an instant, and feasted his eyes on the scene. Mary's presence gave a home look to that well-remembered dreary room. Her books, her work, herself,—so sweet, so fresh, so lovely,—spread a charm about it, and he gazed for a moment in unconscious delight. But the charm was quickly broken.

Mary saw him enter, and her heart sank. The peaceful dream which for those few days had stilled her aching heart,

and lapped her in a kind of pensive Elysium, was at an end. One look of that cold pale face had sufficed to waken her. She felt it and shuddered. Shuddered not at him but at herself. He was her husband, and she shrank from the sight of him.

She rose instantly, and with a glowing cheek, the expression of her shame and self-reproach, went timidly forward to meet him. She held out her hand. He gave his, barely gave it, dropt hers instantly and advanced into the room. For the sight of her was agony to him. He had come down haunted by her pale face; haunted by the thought, "Mary will die." He had come to satisfy by his eyes the anxiety of his mind, and far different to what he had pictured was the vision presented to him. With that glowing cheek, that timid girlish air, she looked

like Mary Lynd say his love, not Mary Merivale his wife; and he said in his suspicious heart, "Away from me she thrives; with me she pines." And had he seen the death he had dreaded to see, the momentary anguish could scarcely have been more acute. Coldly he met her, and then advanced to his sister, and all sat down.

Chilled, saddened, shamed, Mary sat silent and unable to recover herself; and awful was the silence.

Miss Merivale was watching them intently. Her brother's name was seldom on Mary's lips, and she had asked herself the reason why?

She saw now how it was; and with a mind quickened by real affection and real anxiety for both, she endeavoured to relieve them.

"You are not come to take Mary

away from me," she said, in a tone more approaching to playfulness than ever yet had passed her lips.

"It is as Mary pleases," he replied.

"She is not yet recovered. She had better stay on."

Mary roused herself. "I am almost well," she said; "but if you have no objection, and if Miss Merivale will have me, I think it would be wisest to stay out a month. I shall then be quite ready to go home."

She tried to smile as she said the last words, but it was poorly achieved, for she was still suffering from that terrible shrinking that had assailed her on his entrance.

"You had better consult Dr. ———," he replied shortly, "no doubt Catherine is happy to have you." And this subject dropped.

“Have you seen Frank, of late?” Mary inquired, battling with her reluctance to speak.

“I saw him yesterday, at work and well. Hodson speaks highly of his diligence and attention.”

This was more kindly said, and Mary thanked him, but he was impassive to her thanks. He had turned towards her on her inquiry, and had seen her cheek pale,—pale as when she left him; and he said within, “My coming affects her health,” and again he turned to stone.

Mary could think of no further subject, and dead silence reigned in the room.

Miss Merivale rose at last and addressed him. “Will you take a turn with me in the garden, Hubert? A tree was struck by lightning some few weeks ago, and we think it ought to come down. Will you look at it?”

He rose with alacrity, and they went out together.

It was some time since they had met, and she had business questions to ask him. They conversed for several minutes, she asking him her questions, and he, keen, quick, and interested, telling her in few words all she required to know.

It was not the same man who had been seated in the house.

At length they reached the tree. It was a fine fir, but shivered by the lightning, the trunk split, and several of the branches blighted and scorched.

Mr. Merivale contemplated it for some moments in silence. "It is scathed and shattered," he said, at last. "The life is gone out. Let it be cut down."

"Then I will give the order," Miss Merivale said quickly; for though there was something solemn and bitter in his

tone, she did not, or would not, notice it.

“Or will you give it?”

He did not heed her. “Scathed and shattered as my heart is,” he continued, still gazing fixedly at the tree, “would that I, too, could be cut down, and laid in the grave of all mortal things!”

“Hubert!” Miss Merivale said, in a tone of attempted reproof and severity, but in real anxiety and pity. The tone was so mournfully bitter, it went even to her heart.

“It is true!” he cried, rousing himself from his abstraction, turning towards her and speaking quickly and passionately, “She hates me! and what have I to live for? Hates me! and yet is tied to me while I live, for ever.”

“Hates you, Hubert?” Miss Merivale cried, with warmth, “Mary, your wife! hates. How dare you speak of her thus?”

“How dare I!” he said, his eyes gleaming with a strange fiery light.

“I said dare,” she replied, in her usual tranquil tone, “because you slander your wife by such suspicions. No doubt Mary has gone through a sore trial; but it has been and will be for her good. She will come out of it a new creature, fitter and better to be a help to you, Hubert. Believe me you will find it as I say. Be patient. Even now her whole thought and desire is to fulfil her duties to you.”

Little did Miss Merivale know of the being whom she addressed. Every word she said irritated him, and he seized thankfully on one word through which to vent the pent-up feelings of his breast.

“Duty,” he said, with a kind of rage and scorn. “What do I care for Mary’s duty? Do you think I distrust her fidelity to those vows with which we have chained

each other? No," his voice dying away in mournfulness, "I know Mary too well. While life endures we are bound hand and foot to torture each other. I torture her, and God knows she tortures me."

"Have patience," Miss Merivale repeated, desirous to soothe, but unable to grasp the feelings of his mind. "Let Mary hear what you have said, and be sure"

"I will not have her hear," he said, stamping his foot. "Swear to me that what I said to you shall be buried in your breast for ever!"

Miss Merivale hesitated. She was already revolving in her mind a re-acting of the scene. She was already picturing the feelings such a tale as she had to tell would excite in Mary's affectionate heart.

He seized her arm with an impetuosity

that startled her. "Swear to me," he cried, his eyes flashing fire, "swear, or I swear to you," and he did swear a fearful oath, "that I will never look in your face again."

Miss Merivale stood appalled. In all the years of their intercourse she had never heard such a word from his lips. Was this then the end of that marriage for which she had so prayed, so striven? Was this the end of her cares for her brother's soul? "Oh! Hubert!" she said, in heartfelt sadness, in unutterable reproach.

But he cared for nothing now. "Swear," he repeated, grasping her arm till the grasp was pain.

"I promise," she said, at last, sadly and gently, and he released her.

They stood for a few more seconds before the tree. She then said, "Let us go home," and they walked home in silence.

Miss Merivale could not speak. Anguish of mind she could see with calmness, for the mind's sorrows might be health to the soul ; but that fearful oath made her very limbs quiver. For the first time, she felt her inability to sound the depths of the human heart ; for the first time, in spite of a well known and approved doctrine, she *felt* the powerlessness of human means and human efforts to touch with heavenly grace a heart of stone. This marriage ! a swarm of thoughts regarding it thronged from the recesses of memory. Her mother's prayers, her mother's deathbed, her own ceaseless prayers and pleading words ; and this was the end ? Short as was this homeward walk she re-entered the house a sadder and a wiser woman.

Mr. Merivale was too much absorbed in himself to notice his sister's feelings. Even more incomprehensible than were his

undisciplined passions to her, was her supreme anxiety for the immortal spirit to him.

In silence they re-entered the drawing-room, and after a few more measured sentences between him and Mary, he rose and wished them good-bye.

Ever desirous to do the utmost of her duty, Mary now invited him to return, adding even an anxious request that he would return and remain for a short time at Cleeve.

He was taken by surprise, and could think of no excuse. He therefore said he would consider of it, and let her know if it was possible. But he had no intention of returning. After that revelation of his secret feelings to his sister, he felt that to sit with her in Mary's presence, would be an added torture.

The request, however, the having made the request, and his reply, stilled Mary's con-

science. She had done what she could to be with him while her health required absence from home; and having done what she could, she sank once again into the state of tranquil enjoyment which the freedom of Cleeve, and the neighbourhood of her old home inspired.

Towards the end of the fortnight Mr. Merivale wrote to advise a delay in her return. She was at breakfast with Miss Merivale when the letter arrived. He said a violent storm had unroofed a part of the house, and as an immediate repair was necessary, he should take the opportunity to do some other work which would add to the comfort of the upper stories. He supposed a week or ten days would suffice to finish all that was required.

Mary sighed as she put the letter down, not at the information it contained, but at the relief that information afforded her. She

dreaded her return, and condemned herself for her dread.

“Can you put up with me for a short time longer?” she said, after a moment, smilingly to Miss Merivale. “I am desired to remain.”

“I heard you sigh, Mary,” she replied, “Shall you remain unwillingly?” She looked searchingly at her.

“No,” Mary faintly said, blushing and averting her eyes from the keen gaze.

Miss Merivale made no comment, but simply said, “You know, Mary, I can have no greater pleasure on earth than yours and Hubert’s company.”

Mary thanked her, and the subject dropped.

Since the day of that garden scene Miss Merivale’s mind had been occupied with one sole thought; the marriage of Mary with her brother. This in all its

bearings. Its failure to produce what she had hoped, and the fears that failure suggested for the future. She had roused herself to observe, had looked into the depths of Mary's mind, and had trembled at the indifference she beheld. Fettered as she was by the promise she had given she questioned with herself how the future was to be met. During the days that had elapsed she had been able to come to no resolution, but a circumstance that on this day occurred, suddenly inspired her with the hope of approaching the forbidden subject.

Among the patients under her care was a young girl, who, after leading a life of thoughtlessness and levity, was dying in a rapid decline; and who on the brink of the grave remained insensible to her condition, neither exhibiting repentance for the past nor fear for the future. The

cottage where the girl lived lay at some distance from Cleeve, in a direction contrary to Mary's own home, and though she had taken interest in the case from Miss Merivale's daily report, she had never felt equal to the exertion of going to visit her herself.

On the day before this Miss Merivale had returned from her visit saddened and perplexed. The girl's days were drawing to a close, and no effort either of hers or of the clergyman who attended her could make the smallest impression upon her mind. She was dying with a heart as hard as the nether millstone.

The account fastened on Mary's imagination, and during the night a longing to try the effect of her own powers, a conviction of succeeding even though others had failed, seized upon her, and when the morning came, she begged Miss Meri-

vale to allow her to accompany her on her daily visit.

The offer was thankfully accepted, and they went.

That Mary had some power was immediately evident, for that face which exercised its attraction alike over the beggar in the street, and the misanthrope Mr. Merivale, took the fancy of the young girl the very moment it bent over her bed. The sweetness of the smile, the loveliness of the youthful face, and in a degree, perhaps, the freshness and tastefulness of the dress, caught her eyes and won her heart, and after Mary had spoken but a very few kind words, she said, "I like to look at you, Miss, will you sit by me?"

Miss Merivale was incapable of envy. She saw a hope of touching that stubborn soul which no effort of hers could bend or break, and she rose immediately from

the seat by the bed on which she had placed herself.

“It is my sister-in-law, Jessie, and I am sure she will be happy to sit with you. Will you stay, Mary, and I will come again and fetch you?”

She retired out of sight, but not out of hearing, and several times in her anxiety drew near to listen to Mary's words—words how different to hers; not of exhortation, far less of reproof, but as from equal to equal, words of sympathy and pity, and finally of imploring earnestness, that she would attend to the things concerning her peace, before they were hidden from her eyes.

And the hard heart was softened; tears fell on the wasted cheeks, and into Mary's ears was poured the anguish of a mind, not too hard to feel remorse, but too proud to reveal the feelings that preyed upon it.

The interview was long, and ended in a promise on Mary's part to come again, and she and Miss Merivale returned home.

At the moment, Miss Merivale simply thanked her for what she had done; but as they sat together in the evening, she said, in a tone solemn as usual, but touched with unusual tenderness, "How is it, Mary, that you can feel so deeply for the soul of one a stranger to you, and yet are indifferent to the welfare of that soul which should be dearest to you on earth?"

Startled and conscience-stricken Mary put down her work, and gazed at her with a flushed cheek and wide open eyes.

Miss Merivale went on. "I am no flatterer, Mary, and what I say, that I feel. We have now been some weeks

together, pleasant weeks to me, pleasant now and pleasant in memory, for I have found you a sister indeed. You have surpassed all my hopes but one. I have seen no fault in you but one."

She paused, and Mary sighed and was silent. She could not thank her for her kind words, nor yet ask concerning that failure of which she spoke.

"You do not ask me, Mary, what I mean. You know it too well. Oh! would that words of mine could tell you the sorrow I have felt in seeing your indifference to my brother!"

"Not indifference, Miss Merivale," Mary said, with a quivering lip, "I have tried to be to him a faithful wife. But you know, you surely know the awful trial that assailed me. It was an awful thing to see the person that had been better loved, that *was* better loved still," and her soft

features assumed an expression of rigid horror as this confession, a truly awful one to her, was made.

“Yes, Mary, I knew and felt for you. Though I am not versed in such feelings, I can conceive that it was, as you say, an awful trial. I have no fault to find with you in that respect. I believe you to be, as you say, a faithful wife to my brother. But what is that, Mary? What is a cold and barren faithfulness to one like you? The Scribes and Pharisees might have given such. You will say our affections are not to be commanded. That is a phrase of this world’s philosophy; yet be it so. But have you tried to love him?”

Again silent and conscience-struck, Mary fixed on her her startled gaze.

“The hearts of men are not in human power,” Miss Merivale began again, in a tone more agitated than possibly she ever

had used before. "We are blind and ignorant, and work in the dark. You know how I wished your marriage, Mary; God forgive me if I wished it sinfully. It may have been so; but it was for his soul's salvation. In his love for you I saw the one hope for him, and for a time I thought my hopes were realized. I saw him melting and softening, and I gave God thanks that the lost was found. Alas! my hopes were vain. You may conceive my agony, Mary, when I found them so. And now I see him, with a heart harder than that of the girl whom you have touched, pursuing his wilful way; his soul full of bitterness, his life given up to worldliness; and I see his wife—she who has sworn to love him—looking on indifferent. For all others pitiful, but to *his* poor soul careless—to the cry of his perishing spirit deaf. Oh, Mary, how you must be changed!"

“ It is true,” Mary said, in a low voice. The words were as few as those in which David made his confession ; but, like them, they contained a life-long penitence.

“ When I heard you this morning, Mary—for I did hear you—I resolved to speak. Forgive me if I have spoken harshly. I said one who could so care for a stranger, *must* care for her husband. And now I have done. Evil is round about you, Mary, but be not overcome of evil—neither of his evil, nor my evil (if I led you into temptation), nor the evil of your own weak heart ; but overcome evil with good. God has given you a loving heart, Mary. Do not waste His precious gift.” She rose from her seat, softly kissed Mary’s cheek, and left the room.

If Miss Merivale had failed in her exhortations to the young girl, she might

have been proud—could she have been proud on such a theme—of her success with Mary. Truth is mighty, and must prevail where there are ears that will bear to hear truth. She had spoken but the simple truth, and as soon as she heard it Mary's eyes opened. She saw the past as it was. Satisfied to do her duty, to struggle with a forbidden affection, she had not tried to love her husband. She had been full of herself, and had not pitied his disappointed heart. Her feelings towards him could not be called indifferent. The dismay, the despair, she felt was not indifference; but, if not actually indifferent, she *had* shown herself so; nay, she had tried to be indifferent to him; separating herself from him, endeavouring to make a life without him. She looked back with horror. The hardest iron *will* soften; the very rock can be ground to powder.

Surely, then, his heart—that heart which had so loved her—could have been won, had she determined it should be won. An immortal soul had been given into her keeping; she had accepted the guardianship; and now, perhaps, her opportunity of saving it was lost for ever.

These thoughts, and such as these, rose tumultuously one above the other, and she passed the night that followed in the acute misery which a wounded conscience brings. But Mary had been gifted with a strong, and sane, and hopeful mind, and one in which remorse is short-lived, for it almost at once becomes repentance; grieving for the past, but pressing on to redeem the past in the future.

When she went down to breakfast, she saw a letter on the table, and for the first time saw it with a hope it might be from Mr. Merivale. She was longing

for action. It was not. It was from Frank.

“MY DEAR MARY,

“I think you will be almost as surprised as I was, to hear that I am going to leave Mr. Merivale and the Bank. Yesterday evening he sent for me into his private room. I was rather flustered, for though my conscience was quite clear that I had done the best for him I could, still a private conversation is *not* a particularly agreeable thing. However, I went, and he then told me that Mr. Lloyd, a great India merchant, had asked him if he could recommend him a trusty young man to undertake some business of his, and that he had mentioned me. It is a very good place, a sort of bettermost clerk, beginning at three hundred a year. You may fancy

my feelings, my dear Mary. I never was so taken aback. However, I did not let Mr. Merivale see that. I thanked him, of course; but I said that if he thought I was fit, I had no doubt I was, and that I should do my best to please Mr. Lloyd, as I had to please him. I made a very proper speech in short, and he seemed to think so. He then gave me a letter to Mr. Lloyd, and he gave me a few sharp words of advice too, raking up that old unpleasant business, which I thought bad taste. But I was too much obliged to him to be offended, and so, Mary, there it is. Mr. Lloyd seemed to approve of me, and so you see me a man of fortune, having by my own exertions gained an income of £300 a year. Mr. Merivale told me you did not know, and that I might write and tell

you. Of course I am very much obliged to *you*, Mary, because of course it is all done for your sake.

“Yours affectionately,

“FRANK LYND SAY.”

“P.S.—You may just tell my father that I think he has some little reason to be proud of me.

“I forgot to say that poor old soul looks awfully glum, and they say—between ourselves—that he’s going it. I think you had much better come back.”

A tear of self-reproach fell from Mary’s eyes. While she was indifferent to him, how he watched over the welfare of her family. For the moment her feelings towards him became even soft in their ardent gratitude, and breakfast was scarcely over before she hastened to write

to him. This event, besides the pleasure it gave her on Frank's account, gave her the very opportunity she desired, and though she did not in her letter touch on the past, or speak of penitence, the tone in which she wrote was so warm and kindly, she thought it must bring him to her side. At the conclusion of the letter she said, that although, if her presence was inconvenient, she would not press for a return, yet that she was tired of her absence, and would not for her own sake mind a little discomfort in the house.

Having written this letter, her spirits rose. She had again done what she could; and though the immediate answer she had anticipated did not come, the hope she had set before her buoyed her up, and beat off the recurring sug-

gestions of despair. And so mighty is the power of hope—above all, of *a* hope definite and strong—that her health in the few days that followed, answering to the mind, gathered up an elasticity that even of late, in its improved state, had been wanting. The quick footsteps that now hurried backwards and forwards between Cleeve and the cottage were in a degree at least akin to the old flying pace of Mary Lindsay.

But these days of hope were shortened. Mr. Merivale made no reply to her letter. Every morning Mary thought her answer must come, and the morning passed in disappointment. She wrote again timidly. Her correspondence with Mr. Merivale from Cleeve had been intermittent—letters short, and few, and far between. This was on her side at least her own fault. She, true as the day, had been

unable to feign, or make up a letter of unfelt speeches. She had even thankfully acquiesced in the silence he on his side maintained. But she felt it now. To her second timid letter again no answer was returned. Vague terrors began to possess her soul. Not the terrors of affection. Affection is not so easily stirred up. She did not love Mr. Merivale any more than she had done; but a feeling imperious almost as affection was now paramount within—repentance; the desire to redeem the past; the dread, lest already it was too late, lest some barrier was springing up between her repentance and her.

She wrote to Frank, revealing reluctantly, in her intense anxiety, the estrangement in which she and Mr. Merivale lived. He answered her immediately.

“MY DEAR MARY,

“I am very sorry to have to say disagreeable things ; but I am afraid there is something wrong. I have been all the week at Lloyd’s, and working precious hard ; but I went yesterday to the bank, and I found them all black enough. What was told me was told me in confidence ; and besides you would not understand ; but things are not looking well, I can tell you. Don’t be uneasy though, dear Mary, for Mr. Merivale is a lucky man, and I have no doubt it will all blow over. You shall hear from me again to-morrow ; but you must not repeat what I say.

“Yours affectionately,

“F. LYND SAY.”

Notwithstanding that last injunction, Mary laid this letter before Miss Merivale.

“I have long expected something of this kind,” she said, after reading it. “Let us not lament, Mary; but rather rejoice, if by this means, if by any means, he is weaned from his idol, and his soul plucked as a brand from the burning.”

CHAPTER IV.

“I looked
 On her—at once superior to my woes
 And partner of my loss
 The eminence on which her spirit stood
 Mine was unable to attain. Immense
 The space that severed us.”

WORDSWORTH.

GOING! my dear Mary! Going to-day,”
 cried Mrs. Lyndsay, when an hour or two
 afterwards Mary appeared at the cottage to
 wish “good-bye.” “Good gracious me, how
 fast you all do live now a-days! I’ve hardly
 time to think about anything before there
 comes a change.”

“Why do you go, Mary?” asked Captain Lyndsay, looking at her intently. “Has Merivale sent for you?”

“No, father,” she replied, her colour rising, “but I think I had better go. I have been too long away.”

“I don’t see that, Mary,” said her mother, “you looked like a ghost when you came, and now you look like a rose. My belief is, that London don’t agree with you. It never did with my mother, and you are the very picture of her; what she was at your age; at least so I always fancy. So, my dear Mary, don’t you go off in this way. We shan’t know what to do when you are gone, and I really do think London will kill you.”

“Mr. Merivale is my husband, mother,” Mary said, gently. “Wherever he is, it is right that I should be, is it not?”

“I don’t think husbands care much about it,” said Mrs. Lyndsay, regardless of prin-

ciples in her anxiety to retain Mary. "Mr. Merivale has only been once to see you, and that don't look as if he cared."

Mary blushed. Captain Lyndsay said sternly, "Hush," then turning to Mary, kissed her and said she was always right.

The interest with which Captain Lyndsay followed Mary's fate, was insensibly working a change within. He had always loved and always been proud of her; but she had been like a toy in his hands; and even her sorrows had excited but a dreamy kind of compassion in his breast. Far different was the feeling with which he contemplated her now; remorse at the suffering evinced by the settled expression of sadness in her face; admiration at the power with which she combated the misery written there; wonder at her awakening intellect; sympathy with her decision of mind; all these things blended together, transformed the father's natural affection into

a strong and powerful instrument, strong and powerful enough to pierce the crust of selfishness no other feeling had ever been able to penetrate.

His fond kiss, his approving words, his evident comprehension of, and sympathy with, her state of mind, encouraged and strengthened her; and though she could not again bid them farewell without tears, she spoke hopefully and cheerfully to the last; winning from them both a promise that a visit should be paid before the depth of winter set in.

She arrived in London between four and five o'clock.

It was now the latter end of October, and the London day was closing in with mist and cold. Mary felt chilled as she entered it. Her reception at her own house was of the same unassuring nature. The servants looked at her doubtfully, and looked

at one another as if her presence perplexed them.

Mary asked no questions, except as to whether Mr. Merivale dined at home. The butler did not know—but something was ready, and all would be ready by the time Mrs. Merivale required it.

She then ordered a fire to be lighted in the drawing-room, and there she waited until Mr. Merivale should return home. That something was the matter, or that something was suspected, was plain; but whatever it might be, Mary was determined to hear it from Mr. Merivale alone. She would not even let Frank know of her arrival, lest the news should be broken by him.

Six was the usual hour for Mr. Merivale's return; but six, seven, eight went by and he did not appear.

Mary sat by the large fire in the draw-

ing-room, chilly because so long unused, dreary because no signs of habitation disordered its formal order, and the inexpressible dreariness of lonely anxiety stole over her mind.

She watched with an agony of watching for the sharp, well-known sound with which Mr. Merivale closed the door, and became almost afraid to breathe lest the soft noise of her breathing should overpower that heavier clash.

As it drew towards nine she began to feel the faintness of hunger, and resolving to have all her strength and powers about her, rang and ordered a tray of dinner to be brought up. She was obeyed; the butler looking pitifully at her, and stealthily substituting a larger size glass of wine than was usual, that she might receive a greater portion of strength than she suspected.

Mary was refreshed ; and, roused by the change of employment from her dismal mood, more hopefully and courageously set herself to meet whatever was before her.

It was past half-past nine, when at length she heard a sound and the house-door did close ; not, as usual, with a sharp, quick clash, but with a smothered sound.

But if Mr. Merivale hoped to creep into his house unperceived, he was mistaken. The butler was watching below as resolutely as Mary above, and immediately confronted him.

Mary softly opened the drawing-room door, and heard "Mrs. Merivale is come, sir. She is in the drawing-room expecting you. Have you dined, sir?"

What answer was returned Mary did not hear. It was very low ; and seizing

a small lamp which always stood ready for him, Mr. Merivale hurried to his own study, and closed the door.

Mary waited not an instant to collect her thoughts, but hastened after him. She knocked, but scarcely pausing for permission to be given or refused, entered; and in her turn closed the door, and stood beside him.

The lamp had been set down, and he stood with his back to the door, leaning his head on a low chimney-piece. The grate was empty. In solitude, his parsimonious habits had again been creeping over him, and though acutely sensitive to cold and gloom, he had spared this indulgence to his mind and body, while recklessly casting away thousands in the madness of his thirst for gain.

Mary approached, and laid her hand on his arm. "You would not answer my

letters," she said. "Forgive me if I come without your leave. I could bear to wait no more."

The tones were soft and pleading, as affection and anxiety themselves. Mr. Merivale seemed struck and astonished by them. For a moment other thoughts were put by, and looking up, and looking at her, he said, "You here, Mary; what made you come?"

"You would not answer," she repeated, "I began to be frightened. I was afraid you must be in some trouble."

"In some trouble!" he repeated ironically, and drawing back. "Oh, yes, I understand. Perhaps you heard rumours; you were afraid ruin was at hand." He hated himself for his suspicion, even while he spoke; but the suspicion was there, and he spoke it.

Mary's heart sank, and her hopes died.

Ever thus, ever to be repelled! The solitary lamp shed its light on her face, and he saw the eyelids cast down and trembling on her cheek, and the colour rush up and die away again.

“Forgive me, Mary,” he cried, passionately, and turning from her, again laid his head in his hands.

There was a short silence, and then again Mary approached and touched him. “You wrong yourself and me by this distrust. If there is trouble at hand, I am your wife, let me bear it with you.” The tone in which she addressed him was one totally new. It awed him. She was no longer the gentle girl subdued by his harshness, but a woman, who, even in her gentleness, awed and subdued him by her superiority. He made no answer, but he raised his head, and stared at her.

“What did you say of ruin?” Mary asked. “Is it ruin that is hanging over us?”

“And what should you say if it were?” he replied, in a tone harsh from anguish.

“I should say, ‘Thank God,’” Mary said, steadily.

“Thank God?” he repeated, staring at her with his haggard, restless eyes.

“We have been miserable enough in riches, because of your distrust; you would not let me be your wife to help and comfort you. Welcome any change. Welcome poverty itself if it may bind us together.”

“Then it is ruin, Mary,” he said, and he fixed his eyes upon her, that he might see the quailing the knowledge of the truth would bring.

“Then for my own sake I say

thank God," she said, without moving a muscle.

"You speak like a child," he cried, harshly, and again drew back. His soul was full of bitterness.

The one thought of comfort in his miserable married life had been in the worldly goods he was able to lavish on Mary and her family. *There* he maintained his superiority. There he had a right over her. Now he was humbled beneath her feet, and his was no patient soul, which can bear humiliation with dignity.

"I may not fully understand," Mary said, gently, in part reading or guessing the feelings that tortured him; "and I grieve for that which is a grief to you. But I say it again, I have been miserable in riches, and for myself I do not dread poverty, if only you will let me

be as your wife, and share your cares with you."

"Oh! Mary, forgive me!" he cried, seizing her hand and kissing it. "I am a wretch unworthy of you. Go now and leave me to myself. I will come to you presently, and you shall know all."

She obeyed with ready obedience, and with something of hope in her heart; stirred up the fire and ordered tea, and endeavoured to prepare for him a cheerful welcome. She saw that the way she had to travel would be a toilsome way, but there seemed a hope in the end, and she was thankful.

CHAPTER V.

“ If on thy firstling energies there chance
A check, a chill, a blight, and a surprise,
Despond not, but be still.
That winter comes to strengthen and enhance
The life, the love, that in thy spirit lies,
And bend thee to God’s will.”

THE Bank closed the following day. Mr. Merivale had subjected himself in some railway speculations to enormous liabilities, and it was uncertain how he could meet them. The Bank closed, and this

was one of the bitterest ingredients in the whole business. This respected house, which for nearly a century had carried on its business with honour, was now the theme of evil tongues. Mr. Merivale, like his father before him, had been proud of his credit. He knew that it had been said, that while England was safe, so safe was the Merivale Bank, and come what might, that good name, that untainted credit was lost.

Mr. Merivale's liabilities were great, but so also were his possessions. In every nook and corner of England; in towns and villages; in turnpikes and roads, and canals; in gas companies, and water companies, and land companies; at home and abroad; in mines and railways; wherever investments could be made, there he had investments; some good and saleable, some that had been good,

but were bad, and could be sold only with loss. Out of the mass of these transactions, the desired information shortly came forth, that he was able to meet all demands, to satisfy all depositors in his bank, and that the bank would close with credit. Some small surplus might still remain; some unsaleable shares be still held on in hope; but this was all. To all intents and purposes he was a ruined man.

“Well, Mary,” said Frank to her one day, “this is a horrid bad business, and I don’t feel it any the less because I am out of the mess; though I must say it seems quite a providential thing that I am.”

“Yes, Frank, I thought of you the very first thing. I don’t think I could have borne it, if you had suffered.”

“Oh! life is a chance. We all run chances, but it certainly is as well as it is. And it’s a great thing, Mary, that no one will suffer loss. I should have been very sorry for poor widows and orphans if they had lost what was lying in the Bank.”

“It is the greatest comfort,” Mary said, warmly. “I care for nothing now except my father and mother’s disappointment. That makes me unhappy sometimes.”

“I suppose you know, Mary, that your settlements are not signed. That’s a bad job, and I think the governor must be mad when he remembers. It is a very curious thing, but it is a thing I have often had occasion to observe, that the sharpest men commit the greatest follies. I would have wagered my father as a sharp man of business against all the

world, but here he has dawdled and dawdled, never fixing a day to go to the lawyer's, and there it is. If it had not been for this, you would have been rich still, Mary."

"Never mind, Frank, I don't want to be rich. I look forward to being poor. It will be something to do in life. I never was made to be idle." She spoke from her very heart.

"You were made to be an angel, Mary, that I always will say. There are not two other women in the world who would have borne this as you have. It's all very well to bear things when people marry for love, but when they don't. . . ."

"When they don't, a change brings hope with it, and hope is life." There were tears in Mary's eyes. She was at times dispirited, so strangely variable

were the moods of her wretched husband, and on this morning all attempts to soothe and soften him had failed. She shook them off after a moment, however, and went on, "Mr. Merivale hopes to get something to do, and if he does it will probably be out of London. I shall like that, except on your account. My dear Frank, I shall miss your visits dreadfully."

"And I am sure I shall miss you, Mary," he said, looking very blank. "It will be horrible."

"And besides missing you, Frank, I shall be anxious about you. Anxious for your happiness," she added, quickly, as Frank drew himself up with a stately air. "I wish. . . ."

"What do you wish?"

"I wish there was the least bit of chance of your marriage. I think you

would be happy if you were married, Frank, to a nice wife."

"Well, Mary, it is not at all an impossible thing. Ever since you told me what you suspected about that girl, I have had a hankering after her. It amuses me to try and make out that you are right. Besides, she's a very good girl—not to be compared to Mrs. Larpent, of course; and I don't care about her at all in the way I did for her; but still I like her very well, and I sometimes think it will do."

"If you like her enough, I think it would."

"Oh! I like her well enough. Of course, it don't flatter me to be chosen by her, as it did, I must own, when Louisa took to me; but I look at things, you know, Mary, in a philosophical light. Love is all very well, but it don't do to live upon; and I think I shall be a great deal more

comfortable with a girl like the young Miss Davis than I ever should have been with Mrs. Larpent,—even in her best days.”

“ I think so too. If you like Mary Davis well enough to marry her, I am sure you will find every day that you like her better.”

“ If I could only think of a name to call her ! ” he said, in a vexed tone.

Mary smiled, and left this perplexing question for future consideration. Among her many trials and discomforts, the improvement in Frank was an unfailing source of gratitude. Even now, peculiarly as he might put his sentiments into words, she could see the increasing appreciation of what was true over what was false in his mind, and this is the victory of victories. Bacon supposes the love of a lie to be inherent in us all ; but certainly, to shallow

minds, the false glitter of showy things is the strong temptation. When what is true is perceived, the mind itself begins to enlarge and deepen.

The question of Mr. Merivale's future destiny was now the absorbing one. That he must have occupation—not so much for the livelihood of his body as his soul—occupation the harder the better, was apparent; and, luckily for him, his reputation as a man of business was so high, that occupation was not far to seek. He might, in the fever of his heart, have misguided himself, and perilled his own goods; but, as an adviser of others, the keenness of his sight had never been known to fail, and in the thousands of transactions that had passed through his hands, no unfortunate one was on record.

Friends, in the common acceptation of the term, he had not, for his friendships were

built alone on the foundation of business ; but admirers, well-wishers, and adherents he had in many quarters of the globe, and some of these now came forward with offers of future employment. He was, however, hard to please. His heart was sore, his temper proud in its humiliation, and offer after offer was refused in disgust. Against London, his determination was fixed, and yet his very soul recoiled from the dreary thoughts of the country.

An offer, at length, was made, which excited the first gleam of satisfaction. It was from one of these "friends," to undertake the superintendence of some mercantile business at Hamburg. Thinking most of himself, and little of Mary, he went home with a livelier step than of late ; and in the course of the evening, when he had thoroughly mastered and digested the plan, he laid it before his wife.

Poor Mary! Sharp was the pang of that first suggestion. Absence from England had never presented itself to her imagination. Absence from England was one of the bugbears of her homely nature. Absence, and with Mr. Merivale *alone*. She recoiled, and a flush on her cheek betrayed the inward recoiling.

She did not speak; and after a moment, Mr. Merivale said, "Well, Mary?"

"I am thinking," she said, slowly.

"You do not approve, I see," he continued, and the tone of his voice, which had been friendly, became cold and hard.

"I am thinking," Mary repeated, unable to vary the phrase. "You must let me consider the plan." There was a violent struggle. Flitting before her came the remembrance of another offer to leave England, and then her duty had been clear, and how was it now? Not to go, for her parents' sake,

then, and ought she to leave them now? Her mind seemed a blank.

“I see you do not approve,” he began again, and his tone was colder still. “Well, Mary, it is as you will. For my part I am sick of England; there, perhaps, I may breathe freely; but you can do as you please. You can remain with Catherine at Cleeve?”

“Will Miss Merivale be able to stay at Cleeve?” Mary asked, in surprise, and catching at this question to postpone the other.

“Yes. My sister’s money is well secured. She proposes either to raise a sum and purchase it outright, or to rent it of me. As the property, though valuable in her eyes, has no great value in the market, I think the renting it will probably be sufficient. I fancy an arrangement can be made.” This explanation he gave with his usual eagerness in money matters, but when it was done he changed his tone, and added, “She will re-

main at Cleeve, and since my wishes are an annoyance to you, there you can remain with her."

"You must not distrust me," Mary said, with great gentleness. "You have promised you will not. I was startled at first, I own. I had not thought of living abroad, but I will think it over. Already I begin to see that the plan is a good one."

"Forgive me, Mary," he sighed, and said.

He was subdued by her gentleness, but the remembrance of her recoil left a rankling sting behind.

Mary did think it over, and the advantages of the proposal soon struck her forcibly. The total novelty, the suitable occupation, most of all the total dependence of herself upon him for society, help, guidance, sympathy, was in their peculiar

circumstances an advantage not to be estimated. He might, he almost must, in that strange place, soften towards her, and become her protector. Seeing this with her clear eyes, feeling that it would be a help in that hope she had set before her, she resolutely turned her gaze from herself, and went down in the morning, determined to express her cheerful acquiescence.

Mr. Merivale was already seated at the breakfast table, poring over his letters. By Mary's plate one letter was placed. Before she could speak, before she sat down, the letter made her tremble.

She sat down and took it up. The handwriting was strange. With a force upon herself she turned the letter round, and was about to break the seal, when the word "Loch-Art" on the seal caught her eyes. She had known it from the first, and now unable to proceed, with

trembling fingers she laid the letter down, and busied herself with the preparation of breakfast.

Those feelings which she had so trusted were subdued! Could the mere sight of that word undo all that the struggle of months had done? She bowed her head over the breakfast table, affrighted and ashamed, and the thoughts of Hamburg passed from her memory.

The letter remained untouched. She could not prevail on herself to open it there and then; but it lay by her side,—her innate rectitude of feeling unconsciously preventing her from putting it out of sight.

The breakfast passed in silence, Mr. Merivale moodily reading over the mass of letters that lay before him.

At length breakfast was over, and the letters were finished. He looked suddenly

up, and his eye fell on Mary's letter. He was not one of those husbands who take undue liberties with their wives' letters; he rarely expressed any interest on the subject. But on this day he did.

"You have not read your letter, Mary," he observed.

"No," she replied. "It is in a hand I do not know."

She blushed deeply; and terrified at her feelings, now forced herself, with his eyes upon her, to do what before she had felt to be impossible.

This was the letter.

"Loch-Art, Nov. 4th.

"DEAR MRS. MERIVALE,

"My cousin Alan has seen with great regret the account of the misfortunes of Mr. Merivale. It happens that, at this moment, an agency which is at my father's

disposal is vacant, and should Mr. Merivale be willing to accept such employment, my father would be happy to secure for the management of a property in which he is interested, assistance so valuable as his. The property I speak of is on the borders of Cumberland, in a pleasant country. It belongs to a ward of my father's who is under age. The tenantry are not very manageable and require a master, but I do not suppose the work is more than can be easily done. There is a small house, and the salary is £400 a year.

“Should this offer be agreeable to Mr. Merivale and to you, I assure you it will give my father pleasure to be of use to any persons in whose welfare my cousin is interested.

“I remain,

“Very sincerely yours,

“JANE SINCLAIR.”

Mary's heart was in a turmoil ; not at the offer itself,—that scarcely made an impression on her brain,—but at Alan's thoughts for her ; at his sympathy ; at his care.

She stilled herself as best she was able, and without a word handed the letter to Mr. Merivale. She knew it would give him pain, but it could not be helped. Perfect openness was now, as always, best.

He took it and read it over, and while he read Mary recovered herself, and quietly awaited what he had to say. He read it over a second time deliberately and without raising his eyes ; but not alas ! like Mary, to master his feelings ; much rather to allow them time to gather and increase. When the second deliberate perusal was over, he looked up and threw the letter to her seat.

“ It is a well-timed proposal,” he said, in a voice of insolent rage, “ and one which no doubt was expected. No need to reflect

upon Hamburg now. Affluence awaits us in England!"

Mary looked up indignantly. She had borne much, but this insult seemed beyond her power to bear. No thought of Hamburg had till this moment recurred to her memory, but as it was now presented it did make her recoil. She gave him that same look of keen reproach which once before had made him quiver before her.

On this occasion, however, it was scarcely given before repentance came. As she glanced her indignant glance, she saw his face. His words might be insolent, but it was misery that was written in his countenance. She repented, and partly the revulsion of feeling, partly the agitation she had previously undergone, and partly a sudden feeling of intense pity both for herself and him, destroyed her usual self-control, and she turned away, and burst into tears.

And then he too melted. Mary in tears ! Mary so quiet, gentle, and submissive, in tears, and at *his* words ! All was forgotten, and with love, and prayers for pardon on his tongue he approached her. “ Mary, my best angel, forgive once again your wretched husband. Mary, you kill me with your tears. Do you not know that I trust you as my own soul, nay much more than my own sinful soul.”

She brushed off her tears, looked up at him, and smiled. “ I was angry and wrong,” she said, “ I know you really do not distrust me. Stay now, and you shall see my answer. Never for one moment did I think that this offer, kind though it is, could be accepted.”

She hastened to write, and Mr. Merivale slowly followed her. One moment before he had said he trusted her more than his own soul ; but now, as he

moved along, there came the thought, "Why such warmth in her tone? Why was not the offer to be accepted? Was *she* afraid to receive a favour from his hand? Was there danger in it to her?"

He stood by the table in thought so deep, that when her answer was placed before him, he read it mechanically, unknowing what he was about.

"DEAR MISS SINCLAIR,

"I have no power to thank you as I could wish, for the kindness of your letter and your offer. You must believe that we are very, very thankful. We cannot, however, avail ourselves of it. A proposal has been made to Mr. Merivale to undertake some business at Hamburg, and as it is a business suitable to his tastes, I think there is no doubt he will accept it. We have met with many kindnesses,

and among them yours will not be forgotten.

“Your very grateful,

“MARY MERIVALE.”

The fearless ease of the letter; the pronoun *we* so freely used; and the mention of the Hamburg place as decided upon, touched Mr. Merivale, and again his jealous thoughts were quieted.

“Mary, this must not be,” he said, gently, as he laid her letter down, “I cannot have you sacrifice yourself for me.”

“It is no sacrifice,” she replied, “I do not say I shall not be sorry when the time comes; but what I *wish* is your happiness; and if you are happy, there is no fear but I shall be happy too. Oh! if you could but believe me!”

He sighed, kissed her hand, and left the

room. Her goodness, her kindness, her devotion, he could not say to *him*, but to her duty, humbled him. His present life was one increasing humiliation. He loved Mary more passionately than ever; but humbled before her, was more than ever despairing of gaining her love.

Left alone, Mary sat down to compose herself, and to reflect; but she found reflection dangerous. With resolute decision, she burnt Miss Sinclair's letter, gave her own to be carried out of sight, and then went forth to some of her haunts among the poor; from the lips of the dying, from the sight of poverty and suffering, endeavouring to take into her heart the needed lesson of thankfulness and submission to her lot.

The employment at Hamburg was accepted, and since there was no reason for delay, the change was to be made at once.

Mary was willing it should be so. She could better bear to go than to think of going; and the miserable excitement of a break-up and a departure, diverted her thoughts from picturing the future she dreaded. She left her home with regret. That old house in Lincoln's Inn Fields had not been loved. It had not been a happy home; but now in leaving it, it seemed a friend, and became dear. London, too, had never been loved; she had sometimes felt it was hated; but on that point, too, her feelings changed, and London was left with regret.

These inanimate objects were not the only ones that excited feeling. The clergyman, who had been a friend and teacher—the poor, who wept at the thoughts of her loss—the servants, who, during their short acquaintance, had given her their hearts—and Mary Davis, who sobbed when

she wished her good-bye; all these added their mite to weigh down Mary's spirits. She had hardly thought of the many friends she had made while she had them about her; but every moment of her last days in London, brought a fresh parting, and added a new sting to the regrets for the past.

On leaving London, she went for a week to Cleeve; and from thence was to start with Mr. Merivale for Hamburg.

Miss Merivale received her with warmth, and while with her, Mary's mind regained its tranquillity. The one thought that possessed Miss Merivale, became again her thought; a thought, a hope, sufficiently strong to support and animate her in all she had to do.

And she required support, for the lamentations of her mother, and the silent grief of her father, broke her heart.

"I never liked this marriage, Mary," cried her mother, one day, in confidence, sobbing as she spoke. "I never did. If I had been minded, it never would have been made. I said Mr. Merivale was not a fit husband for a young thing like you, and it proves I was right. But I don't care about being right. I only care about losing you."

"It will not be for long," Mary said, with tears in her eyes, and a sigh in her heart, but speaking cheerfully. "I sometimes think, dear mother, that things will turn out better than they look now. Sometimes I think we shall come back and live at Cleeve, and that would be better than even London. Would it not, mother?"

"You don't say so. Well, that is a thing to think of. But I should not care where you lived, Mary, so as it

was England. England is England, you know, and if you were ill I could get to you; but I believe you might die at Hamburg, and I should never know."

"Not so bad as that. Hamburg is very near. It is not like—like India," and she sighed as that old recollection came back.

"It is no use telling me that, Mary. I know what it means when a person goes abroad. It is *out of England*, and far or near it comes to the same thing. I am sure I don't know what I shall do, and your father feels it just as bad," and she cried bitterly.

"But, mother, you think I *ought* to go with my husband?" Mary asked, troubled at her mother's excessive grief.

"No, indeed, I don't. I think husbands have no right to go and ruin their wives, and I am sure it is not

what your father expected of Mr. Merivale. I am sure I hope he wont come and wish me good-bye, for I can't bear to think of him."

"You would if you knew how unhappy he is, mother. He is more unhappy about it all than even you or I can be. Dear mother, you must not be unkind to my husband. You must remember he is my husband, and try to love him."

"That's impossible. I never did, and I never shall. Oh, Mary, if you could only know how I lie awake at night, and wish you had married that other poor young man."

"Hush, mother," and Mary kissed her. "It did not please God that it should be so, and it is wrong to have those thoughts. Dear mother, do try to believe

that God's will is better than ours, as I do."

"Yes, Mary, I will *try*," Mrs. Lyndsay replied, awed by the gravity of Mary's words. "But I am afraid that it will be of no use. A person cannot help seeing things that are right before their eyes."

Captain Lyndsay said less than his wife, but he too spoke. Remorse for what he had done was now gnawing within, and he could scarcely restrain an apology and explanation of all that had formerly occurred, which certainly would not have been for Mary's good. He pitied her so deeply, that he almost forgot his own share in the loss of a rich son-in-law.

The heroism of this forgetting was not so great as it appeared. Captain Lyndsay

was no longer involved in a miserable poverty. Now that Mary and Frank were provided for, his small income covered the wants of his tiny household; and as, during the time of Mary's riches, every luxury he had ever coveted had been supplied, he could look forward with equanimity to the future.

But this very fact left his thoughts more free to dwell on Mary, and when first he met her after her loss, he put his arms round her, and said, "My child, my poor child!"—and then, too much overcome to remain with her, returned to his own solitude.

To him, to comfort him, Mary thought it necessary to speak her thoughts more freely than to her mother. She told him, in words few, but suggestive, of the struggles she had undergone, and ended,—

"When such things have been felt, other

trials—loss of fortune, and even dear father leaving you—is less hard to bear. Dear father, there is nothing so bad as the feeling of *guilt*, and that I have had.” She blushed as she stood humbled before him, and then added, “But it shall be so, with God’s help—no more.”

“My poor child!” he said, kissing her; and from his hard, stern eyes a tear fell.

But vainly had she tried to comfort him. Those words, day and night, were in his ears. She, in her innocence, in her perfect trust in his love, little thought of the toils that had caught her in that snare. Her repentance had been in the remembrance that her own will had done it. But *he* could remember every wheel of the engine that had been set in motion; in the silence of night, and in the silence of solitude, the schemes of years, the watchings and plottings rose up—now one, and now another

from the recesses of memory — rose up before him, and pierced him with their sting.

CHAPTER VI.

“ I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat ; nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself.”

SAMSON AGONISTES.

THE months flowed on. In the last chapter it was November. It is now August.

During all these months Alan Sinclair remained immoveable at Loch-Art. Lord Sinclair's disease softly and imperceptibly brought him nearer and nearer to death ;

but its progress towards the end was so slow that often, for weeks, it seemed to have paused in its fatal course, and to have granted a reprieve.

Alan became his comfort. When the first shock of his arrival, and the consequences of that shock were over, Lord Sinclair calmed into quietness; and though never perfectly sane, there were moments when the insanity was of so gentle and touching a kind, that it endeared instead of affrighting.

The life at Loch-Art, especially in the winter months, was, under its present circumstances, dreary enough; but the calm melancholy pleased Alan well, and had it not been so, he was too kindly-natured and too well-principled, to shrink from a duty so evident as that set before him. He was the heir; he was treated as a son; such being the case, it was but fitting

he should be *as* a son, and he gave himself to the task with a ready heart. Though with regret, he left the army and established himself as the son of the house.

However imperceptibly, the disease progressed, and in June a slight attack changed the outward appearance of Lord Sinclair's illness. The constitution had been undermined, and the strong man was now ready for death. He took to his bed, and never rose more.

During the six weeks that followed, when as a child in body, and almost a child in mind, he required unceasing care, Alan shared with Jane in those ceaseless cares; watching for her when she could be persuaded to rest; helping her always by his forethought, sympathy, and brotherly affection. There was but one feeling regarding him in the neighbourhood. The young lairds had perished, but Lord Sinclair had got a son; Miss Sinclair

had got a brother; and they would have a master worthy, nay more than worthy of his race. And Alan read approbation and affection in all countenances, and his own conscience smiled upon him, and he felt he ought to be thankful, and yet thankfulness was no inmate of his heart.

In the beginning of August, Lord Sinclair died. A week afterwards he was buried, and Alan was Lord Sinclair.

At the earliest possible moment that that name could with propriety be given to him, Dr. Oliver gave it. Certainly in no want of reverence and affection to his late friend and patient, but because he was the strong-minded man who always chose to do the proper thing at the proper moment. It was on the afternoon of the day of the funeral, the first time he met Alan after the sad ceremony was over.

Alan started and coloured at the new

appellation, and though he scarcely knew why, shivered at it.

He was perfectly aware that he was now Lord Sinclair. For weeks and months he had seen the day approaching; when he stood as chief mourner at his uncle's bier, he had known that he was the bearer of his name, the successor of his honours; when he re-entered the house from which the body of its late master had been borne, he had known it was now his own; and yet in spite of all this, the reality of the change had never pierced the dull coat of custom in which man is wrapped. As Dr. Oliver said the name, he *felt* its truth and shivered; for what was it to him now?

He turned away at the moment, scarcely knowing what it was that made him shrink; but as he stepped out and walked alone a rush of feelings, overlaid

of late by many cares and anxieties, came from their hiding place and mastered him. He was Lord Sinclair. This fair abode and wide demesne was his own ; wealth, not lavish, but sufficient, was in his hands. He had all, as it seemed, that man could have, and what was it to him ? The one being whose smile could have made, as he thought at least, the desert a paradise, was withheld from him, and without her, paradise itself was a desert. It was the old tale, the old temptation ; regrets, longings, repinings, covetings, rising up again powerful as ever, and overmastering him.

He returned home to pass a long evening alone. The day was August, but the weather was damp and cheerless. Jane had not left her room since her father's death. She was worn out, and hid herself from sight. Dr. Oliver and Made-

moiselle Melanie dined with Alan at the usual hour of seven, but Dr. Oliver was occupied in the evening, and Mademoiselle Melanie retired when he did. Alan did not want their society: he was grateful when he saw them go; but when he sat alone those same thoughts returned upon him, and he would have been thankful for even their intrusion.

He had made no change. He sat in the room hung with black; no fire in the grate, few lights in the space around; and in the gloom, his future life spread out before him dreary and cheerless; that life which might have been so fair; and all because God had denied him that one thing on which his heart was set. He shuddered. Those who were now about him would depart; he had few friends, few relations; to Jane he *felt* as a brother, but he *was* but a cousin,

and she must go. He must live alone ; not in the happy solitude of a mind at peace with God and man, but with his fearful thoughts, with his coveting of another man's wife.

He strove against them, but not in the right spirit. He endeavoured to think them down, not lay them down before the throne of God. He went to bed with his temptation, and with his temptation he arose.

He was standing in the course of the following afternoon at a window in the saloon, looking over some papers from an escritoire that stood near, when Dr. Oliver entered.

“These black hangings must come down,” he said, bustling up to Alan, and casting his quick eye about him. “Give the order, my lord, to pull them down.”

“Certainly not,” Alan said, with irritation. He had learned to appreciate the intrinsic worth of Dr. Oliver’s character. He had learnt to feel gratitude for his unfailing devotion to his uncle and cousin, and respect for the integrity of his mind. But he had not learned to bear his infirmities patiently; least of all to bear them patiently when his own infirmities were oppressing him sorely.

“All such matters,” he added, coldly, “I leave in Miss Sinclair’s hands, and I must beg that you do not remind her of the change that has taken place.”

“She don’t need much reminding, poor soul. Well, Major Sinclair, as you will. For my part the sooner these proofs of my poor old master’s insanity are removed, the better I shall be pleased; but you are master here, and that’s enough.”

“I agree with you, it would be better,”

Alan said, repenting of his sharp answer. "But still I should be unwilling to give the order. Let us leave all changes for the present."

"Easily said, my lord, but not so easily done. The change *has* come, and we *must* think about it. This establishment breaks up; we must all turn our eyes to the future. For my part I have done so."

"But, Dr. Oliver," Alan said, earnestly, "pray understand me. I wish for no hasty changes. I have not myself given a thought to the future. I am in your hands; in Miss Sinclair's hands; I am ready to do whatever is best for each or all."

"Ah! my lord, you would say, 'leave it all till the spring.' You are very kind, but that won't suit me, and I doubt if it will suit any of us. Miss

Sinclair has probably spoken to you about her future plans."

"Very little. She did not seem inclined to speak, and it was not for me to press her. I know that eventually she intends to live with her aunt at Edinburgh."

"More than eventually, my lord. She received an answer from the old lady this morning, and she has been consulting Mademoiselle Melanie regarding *her* wishes."

"Mademoiselle Melanie will of course accompany her?"

"Well, Major Sinclair, she will of course *at present*. Miss Marchmont is old, and, as I understand, crabbed. She keeps her room, and is no company. Miss Sinclair is unused to live in a town, and will at first find a companion in her walks indispensable; therefore, my lord, I have

sacrificed my own wishes, and have desired Mademoiselle Melanie to continue in her present office."

"And what are your wishes, Dr. Oliver?" Alan said, with some curiosity.

"To put Mademoiselle Melanie into a new office, my lord. To offer her the situation of my wife."

"Indeed! Is that settled?"

"Why, yes, my lord. What could I do? My heart is not made of stone. I found the poor creature crying at the change of prospects, and I saw no way to comfort her but this. In short, although a house of mourning is not the proper scene for proposals of marriage, I did offer her the situation I spoke of, and I need not say," with a short laugh and a pinch of snuff, "that it was accepted."

"I am sure I wish you happiness,"

Alan said, kindly. "Any other assistance I can give you you may command."

"And depend upon it, my lord, I shall trouble you. I take people at their word, and do not forget kind offers. As to *happiness*, if I was not sure of happiness, under all circumstances, in my own breast, I should not go to look for happiness with Mademoiselle Melanie. She is a good creature, and devotedly attached to me, for which of course I am grateful; but as to happiness—humph!" with a shake of the head, and a determined glance.

"I don't know how to frame my wishes then," Alan said, with a slight smile.

"Oh! I shall be happy enough. The fact is, my lord, at my time of life, association is the thing. A fool of five and forty is caught by a pretty young face, or a silly

childish tongue. But I am no fool. I am used to Mademoiselle Melanie. She is associated with much of my past life. She has seen me rise in my profession. For the last two years I have seen her daily. I should miss her if I did not see her. Therefore I make her my wife. The case is very simple ; and it would be well if *others*," with emphasis, "would look on life as I do."

"And when, if Mademoiselle Melanie accompanies Miss Sinclair, is this marriage to take place?" Alan asked, unheeding the last emphatic words.

"Ah ! my lord, that does not depend on my will. Miss Sinclair is my first object, and Mademoiselle Melanie is guided by me. There is a great change before her, my lord. A great change, indeed. The life of three and thirty years to be uprooted. I believe I ought to say thirty-four years. It is hard work, Major Sinclair."

Alan sighed inwardly, and made no answer. It was indeed very painful to his kind heart to banish Jane, and when Dr. Oliver presented the subject in that light, he almost felt guilty.

“You are silent, my lord, but I am sure you regret the change you bring upon her.”

“Of course I do,” he replied, with impatience, “but human life is made up of changes like these, and we can but submit to them.”

“By all means, if there is nothing to be done but submit; but if there are other ways, submission is a poor remedy. You don’t take me, Major Sinclair. Well, plain speaking is the best. Why don’t *you* prevent this change. Why don’t you make Miss Sinclair my Lady at once?”

“Dr. Oliver!” Alan exclaimed, colouring crimson, drawing himself up to his full

height, and casting a withering glance on his companion.

“I beg pardon, my lord, for intruding my advice,” Dr. Oliver continued, totally unabashed. “But the case is so plain, I only wonder your own eyes do not see it. I am not recommending you to do as I do. I know a young man wants more romance than that. I am satisfied with Mademoiselle Melanie, ‘a poor thing, but mine own;’ but you require better things. And may I ask what better thing you can have than Miss Sinclair. Stay, my lord,” as Alan moved with impatience, and seemed about to leave him, “let me say all my say, since I am about it. You are suffering from a disappointed attachment. You start! but do you suppose I did not see that from the first day I looked in your face. Well, my lord, it’s an unhealthy thing; unhealthy to the body and mind, and I may say, to the

soul too, to be brooding over a disappointed attachment. *Cure it.* And no better cure than to marry a virtuous woman, whom you esteem, and can hardly fail to love. Now, my lord, go and think of what I say; and remember this, that in doing good to yourself you save a most amiable young lady from a life that my heart aches to contemplate. Good afternoon, Major Sinclair," and he turned away.

"Stay, Dr. Oliver," Alan said, arresting him with a look of grave displeasure. "I have allowed you to speak, because, to me, such suggestions can do little harm. I can forget them. But you must be aware that, should such a thought—no matter by what means or for what motive—be suggested to Miss Sinclair, you make a breach between my cousin and me, which nothing can ever entirely make up."

"Now, my lord! do you take me for a

fool?" and Dr. Oliver raised so quick and shrewd a glance to Alan's face, that he could not restrain a smile. "No, I see you do not think me a fool; how should you, indeed, when I have searched you through and through? Therefore, you may trust me. We gentlemen have the privilege of choice. We say, 'to be or not to be?' Suggestions of the kind I have just made are, therefore, safe for us. With the female sex it is otherwise. They can but reflect upon the words they hear; and if they have no words to reflect upon, why, God help them! that is all I can say. Good afternoon, Major Sinclair;" and he marched away with a look of great dignity.

Alan returned to his occupation, but he was agitated—not by the words regarding his cousin, but those few words regarding himself. "You are suffering under a disappointed attachment; cure it." Cure it. Had he

ever tried to cure it? The question would arise. He put it by with an impatient answer that cure was impossible, and what was more, was undesired. But when he gave this answer, conscience spoke, and in no whispered accents asked whether it was Christian, whether it was manly, to yield himself thus to the thralldom of a hope that it had pleased God to deny him.

With a violent effort, he mastered the persecution of his reflections, and devoted himself to the search on which he was engaged. But though without the strength to grapple with the suggestions of his conscience, he was too conscientious entirely to evade them. They were stilled ; but an under-current of admonitions was softly whispered for many an hour afterwards.

The following morning, Jane Sinclair came down to breakfast. Pale, thin, and

her large eyes distended, as with overmuch watching or weeping ; but quiet and self-possessed.

“Are you wise ?” Alan said, gently, as she seated herself.

Her lips trembled, and she made no answer, and breakfast proceeded almost in silence.

Dr. Oliver bolted his food that day. It was against all his principles ; but he chose to feel himself in the way ; and in a marvellous short time, considering the quantity required for his nourishment, concluded his repast. He then rose, and said he was in a hurry ; and having by the magnet of his eye suggested to Mademoiselle Melanie to follow him, and to Alan that he was leaving him alone with Jane by design, he and his betrothed wife left the room.

Always thankful for their departure,

Alan was doubly so now. He had seen Jane but little, and had had no opportunity of expressing to her all he wished to express. Dr. Oliver's glance was therefore unheeded. As his eye, however, followed him and his companion from the room, he smiled, and was about to comment on the approaching event, when it struck him that possibly it was not known to Jane.

She saw his smile, and slightly smiling also, she said, "Has Dr. Oliver told you his plans?"

"His future plans he has. He seems in no hurry to put them into execution."

"I suppose you know that I am the impediment. They are both very kind, and I think I shall accept their kindness."

"I am sure, Jane, they will be hurt if you do not."

"I must not be selfish," she replied. "I have seen for many years that to be the mistress of Dr. Oliver's small home is the object of Melanie's ambition, and I think she will make him comfortable. But I do feel that I shall be lonely at first, and I shall be glad to have an old face with me."

A large tear rolled suddenly from her eyes and startled her.

She had come down to talk to Alan, intending to be firm and strong, and yet she failed.

She dashed her handkerchief over her eyes with a movement of impatience.

He looked at her with a compassion and affection that did not help her. "You must not go in a hurry," he said anxiously. I am obliged to go to London on business, and after that I think of going into the Highlands to see after those poor tenants

you are interested in. Why not stay here with Melanie and Dr. Oliver, and let me come and go as before?"

"It would be of no use, Alan. I was very sure you would not want to hurry me, and I did consider some such plan as yours, but I am afraid of it. I am not afraid of the future; it will be a new life, and I shall be a new person to begin it; and if a little dreary at first, I have been so strengthened to bear all my trials that I should be sorry to be afraid of failing now. But of the present, the end of all here, I *am* afraid. I am a great coward about it. It haunts me night and day. I would rather have done it than have it before me. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, I understand," he said sadly.

"It is in no want of trust in your

kindness," she said anxiously; "it is only that I feel I *must* go. Perhaps I am restless and impatient by nature. I cannot bear not to act. I cannot bear to wait with this hanging over me."

She spoke with the force so common to her; the force of manner so out of keeping with her quiet face.

As she finished she rose from the table, and went to the window and looked out. For thirty-four years that landscape night and day had been reflected in her eyes till it had become a part of her very self. And the sadness of late attached to one part of it, had made it dearer still.

When Alan followed her, there was again a tear on her cheek. Again she dashed it off, and said, "You think me weak, Alan. I had so many things to say, and I cannot say them. It must be for another time."

"Oh, Jane!" Alan said, with agitation,

"if Mary had but been mine, you need never have left us. That loss poisons all my life."

A faint glow flitted over her cheek. It was very faint, but her cheek was so pale that it caught Alan's attention, and he found himself wondering what it meant. But she seemed unconscious of it.

"You must not indulge that remembrance," she said, earnestly, "you promised you would not. It will poison your life indeed, if you do."

"No matter for that," he replied, bitterly, "At this moment my life seems of little importance. I, too, sometimes shudder at the loneliness of the prospect before me."

She stood for a moment looking at him, as if what he said had changed the current of her thoughts, or suggested new ones. But after a short consideration, these new ones were put aside. "I can fancy

this large house will be lonely," she said. "For a moment I was thinking of agreeing to your plan; but on the whole, it would be unwise; you and I both, dear Alan, must begin new lives, and the sooner we begin them the better. And I shall have advice to give you before I go," she added with a smile, "and you must promise me to follow it."

"Let me have it now," he said, "and when you have done with my concerns, perhaps you will be strong enough to speak of your own."

And when half an hour afterwards Dr. Oliver re-entered the room in search of a letter he had dropped, he found them still in conversation at the window.

The truth of Alan's remark on Dr. Oliver's suggestion was now apparent. To Jane, his return was indifferent. She smiled as she asked him to ring the bell, saying

they had forgotten to have the breakfast cleared away, and then turned again to Alan while she appointed another hour on the same day in which she might finish the various matters of business on which she wished to consult him. But Alan was annoyed; he thought Dr. Oliver would think his suggestion had been attended to; he fancied he saw suspicion and triumph in his eye; and unwilling to have any remark made, he left the room without addressing him.

As he too left the room with his letter, Dr. Oliver rubbed his hands and said, "Who says you're not a clever fellow, Dr. Oliver?"

CHAPTER VIII.

“Beware of desperate steps. The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have passed away.”

COWPER.

THREE or four days afterwards, Alan went to London, and during his absence Jane Sinclair left Loch-Art.

The present she had dreaded was over, that wrench with which she withdrew herself from all that was dear, had been made, and she was in the future which she had hoped to be able to bear. But

when she found herself in the small house of a narrow street, in which a not poor but penurious lady had set up her abode, her heart died within her. Miss Marchmont was one of those unfortunate beings who have been peevish in youth, discontented in middle life, and are crabbed in their age. Jane had been aware of her character, but Alan and this old lady were the only near relations she possessed, and with the tenacity of mind peculiar to the Scotch character, she clung to the ties of blood, and preferred a home with her to the freedom of independent existence. Yet when she found herself an inmate of her house, received with fretfulness, and met without a welcoming, she half repented of the step she had taken. The repentance, however, was overcome. In spite of the ungraciousness of her reception,

she could guess that her coming might soothe some weary hours, might in time lead to happier thoughts, and she submitted herself to her lot.

But Mademoiselle Melanie was less submissive, and in her letters to Dr. Oliver, "*Pauvre* Miss Sinclair!" was an expression very freely used.

Alan, meanwhile, returned from London. Jane's advice to him had been that he should not bury himself at Loch-Art. She saw that although his life of occupation had been useful to him, yet that the melancholy of the house, the want of society, and the want of diversion and variety, had increased the tendency to brooding and melancholy which was the chief fault of his character. She recommended foreign travel, sports, politics, anything that could banish

painful thoughts, and give strength and nerve to his character.

In obedience to this advice, his intention had been to remain for a time in London; to visit Mrs. Clifton, were she willing to receive him; or some other old friend, could he find any sufficiently interested to bear him in mind.

But when his business was done in London, he found himself like a man in a desert. It was the end of August. Mrs. Clifton was abroad; and of other friends he heard nothing. The streets were parched and dusty, and day after day he paced along, and no familiar face met his view. It was, it must be owned, the natural course of things. What else could he have expected at the end of August? But Alan's life had never been a London life, and having hoped to find in London

diversion for his mind, its solitude was as painful to him as on other occasions its crowd had been.

One cordial greeting, one invitation "Join us in our tour!" or "Come down and shoot!" would have been heard with pleasure, and accepted with gratitude. But day by day he paced about, and in vain.

A longing seized him to return to Loch-Art, and he obeyed it. There he would be welcome; there he would be at home; there his solitude would not oppress him. A short time before he had felt that it did oppress; but a home, even a dull home, bears another face in absence, and weary of the bodily heat and mental cold of London he hastened back to the charms of his own demesne.

It had been already prepared for his reception. The black hangings had been

taken down by Jane's orders, and the house looked cheerful. But it was empty. Dr. Oliver had returned to his cottage. Two servants, a man and a woman, had accompanied Jane and Mademoiselle Melanie; the house was comparatively empty, and it looked so.

Alan felt very dreary; almost as dreary as he had done in London. In the day time there was occupation, but the property by his and Jane's care was in such good order, that there was no press of business for the evening. The days were beginning to lengthen; he remembered the long misty evenings of the autumn before, and he shuddered. Something must be done. . . . he could not bear his life as it was.

He heard from the peasantry their regrets for Miss Sinclair's loss; he heard

from Dr. Oliver (he saw too, for Dr. Oliver took care he should see) the report given by Mademoiselle Melanie of the sadness of Jane's life, and one day suddenly his resolution was taken. She should be his wife.

Whether or no his mind and heart were in a fit state to take on himself that responsibility, he did not inquire. He was absorbed by two feelings, compassion for Jane and compassion for himself, and on the promptings of these two feelings he acted.

He wrote to her one evening. The letter was long, for he had much to say, and much to explain; it absorbed almost the whole evening, and when it was finished, he looked around the empty room, and his heart felt lighter than it had done for many a day. He was certainly formed

for domestic life, and the hope of it made his heart beat. When the letter was sealed, he was impatient for it to be gone; and impatient—although he had requested Jane to think it well over, and not to answer in haste—for an answer to be returned.

He grew so impatient that he felt he could not remain at Loch-Art, and determined, during the necessary interval that must elapse, to take his proposed journey into the Highlands. He reopened his letter to tell Jane this resolution, begging her once again to think over and to weigh well all he had said, and then to answer him.

The following morning he left Loch-Art to visit some property, and make acquaintance with some tenantry in the Highlands. He had bound himself to a

week, but before the week was over his impatience for his answer forced him to return. It was simply impatience. He did not feel that an unfavourable answer would break his heart; he only longed to know what his future life was to be.

He reached Loch-Art in the middle of the day, and found a pile of letters and newspapers awaiting him. He carried them all to the fire in the breakfast-room, and sat down to look them over. There was Jane's letter among many others; but now that he had it in his power, he felt a sudden fear of reading it. Now that the decision was made, he felt a recoil against the knowledge of what it was. He looked at it, laid it down, caught at one or two others; vaguely read some circulars,—kind offers to provide

him with each and all of the necessities of life;—then again took up Jane's letter with desperate resolution; but once again laid it down, and postponed the moment, by glancing over a newspaper.

Something in the newspaper caught his attention. There was a sudden crimson glow on his cheek, and the newspaper fell to the ground. The entry was this:—

“ September the 1st, at Hamburg, Mrs. Merivale of a daughter.”

All thoughts of Jane passed from his memory. Those few words absorbed him. Again and again the newspaper was lifted from the ground, gazed at as if out of those words impenetrable secrets could be discovered, and again and again it was thrown down with impatience, and with looks of gloom and despair.

Leaving letters and papers in disorder, he rose, and with folded arms began pacing up and down the room, stopping now and then to look out of the open window, in a kind of mechanical effort to blow away the agitation of his thoughts.

While thus walking, Dr. Oliver entered, and the sight of his face recalled to Alan the other current of thought, which on his return to Loch-Art had been predominant. He remembered Jane's letter, and that it was unread. But its interest had faded. He neither hoped nor feared now. He was thinking of Mary in a happy home, with a child to love, and to bind her to Mr. Merivale; separated, therefore, in heart as well as in lot from him for ever.

"I heard of your return, my Lord," Dr.

Oliver began, "and I came up to see if Highland air had done you good."

Alan thanked him.

"I can't say much in its favour," he continued, fixing his piercing glance on his face. "I don't like your looks yet, my Lord. You must have somebody to look after you. Depend upon it you will have to take my advice before long."

Alan winced and shuddered. Dr. Oliver's advice! Had he really been sacrificing his future life to Dr. Oliver's advice? To escape from that subject, and from further counsels, he spoke of his late journey and adventures, and left the room in search of a list of names he had drawn up for a project of charity, on which he required his opinion and assistance.

When he returned, Dr. Oliver had picked up the newspaper from the floor,

and was reading it with muttered comments, as was his habit. Unwilling to interrupt him, or thankful to be left in peace, Alan stood at the window, half examining his list, half listening to Dr. Oliver, and wholly meanwhile absorbed in his own agitating reflections.

“‘Sept. 16, at Edgebaston, Bernard Osborne, Esq., of the gout; aged fifty-one.’

“Now that’s ridiculous. No man of fifty-one need die of the gout. Say suppressed gout, or gout in the heart; but simply gout! they must be a parcel of ignoramuses at Edgebaston.

“‘At St. Leonard’s-on-the-Sea, Edith Ellen, infant daughter of Captain Malcolmson, of hooping-cough.’

“Poor little soul, it’s as well as it is. She might have been saved no doubt, but it’s as well as it is. Let her go!

“‘August 10, at Funchal, Isle of Madeira, Margaret, eldest daughter of John Lyon, aged eighteen.’

“I can do nothing for her. All’s been done. She must die.

“‘At Hamburg, August 19, Hubert Merivale, Esq., of low fever. Aged thirty-five.’

“Of low fever. What! let the man die of low fever. Fools and blind! They have killed him. Why was I not there?

“‘At Margate’”

But here the newspaper was seized with a violent grasp from Dr. Oliver’s hands. Alan had stood for a single moment paralyzed, then distrusting the hearing of his ears, and unable to command himself, came to see with his eyes this startling announcement.

Dr. Oliver gazed at him in simple be-

wilderment, as he stood with a flushed cheek poring over the lines.

Alan raised his head, and came to himself.

“I beg your pardon, Dr. Oliver,” he said, as composedly as he could, “but one of those deaths was of a person I knew, and the news . . .” he paused to think of a word, “amazed me.”

“No need for *amazement* at any death,” said Dr. Oliver, drily, nettled at the startling his nervous system had received. “In creatures formed as we are, death can be no *amazing* thing.”

“I mean I was so little prepared for it. Look there! I had seen that just before,” and he pointed to the notice among the births.

“Well, I’m glad to see it, my Lord ; I hope the child will be a consolation to

the young widow; indeed I have little doubt, please God, but that it will. Why! what's the matter now, Major Sinclair?" he cried, in some alarm, as Alan suddenly became deadly pale.

Alan's eye, as he replaced the newspaper on the table, had fallen on Jane's unopened letter; and at the sight he shivered as if stricken by an ague.

"Nothing," he replied, impatiently, slipping the letter into his pocket to withdraw it from the curious eyes of his companion. "If you are ready, Dr. Oliver, we had better go on with our business."

"As soon as you please, my Lord, but first you must permit me to ring the bell. I am not aware if your lordship has any other medical adviser, but so long as I am here, I consider myself respon-

sible for your life. A glass of wine, Donald, and a piece of bread for my Lord."

Alan looked annoyed, but unwilling to make any more ado, submitted, and even bore with tolerable patience a sudden jerk, by which Dr. Oliver caught hold of his wrist, and laid a finger on his pulse. He had but one wish, and that was to get rid of him and be left, not in peace, but in tumult; to the madness and the bewilderment of his thoughts.

"Your health, my Lord!" as Donald considerably brought two glasses, "and remember this, if you neglect to take your proper share of food and nourishment, you will die as sure as I'm alive. Now to business."

And with all his power, with much more power than Alan required or desired,

Dr. Oliver gave himself to the consideration of the scheme, minutely entering into size of families, health of families, and other circumstances. And with lag-gard intellect Alan followed him. Terrified lest Dr. Oliver should suspect the cause of his interest in the news, he did so master himself as to bear his part with decency; but all the while his heart was whirling like a mill-wheel, and the effort on his brain was making the veins in his temples throb with pain.

“You’re not very well, my Lord,” Dr. Oliver said, suddenly rising in the very midst of the calculations. “Let us have done for to-day. Take your hat and go out for a walk, and leave the news and the newspapers,” with a slight wink of one eye, “for to-morrow’s consideration.”

"I think you are right," Alan said, forced into calmness and a show of indifference, "we will leave these papers till to-morrow. My head aches, and I can't give them the attention they need. I believe," he added, with a laugh, "that the wine you have given me has got into my head."

"Fiddle, faddle! You're suffering, my Lord, from over excitement, *not* of the brain, but of *some other portion* of man's frame. Good afternoon, Major Sinclair."

He left the room, and Alan began to breathe, but in a moment he was back again.

"I forgot to say, my Lord, that I heard from Mademoiselle Melanie this morning, and she gives no news of improvement in that quarter. The old lady leads Miss Sinclair the life of a dog; scarcely lets

her stir out of her presence, and yet insults her when she is in it."

Alan sighed. His mind, thus forcibly recalled to painful considerations, was for the moment recalled also from its whirl of excitement. "It is most grievous," he said, "but what can be done? We can do nothing."

"Humph!" said Dr. Oliver. "Well, my Lord, I only mentioned what I heard. I will not detain you longer. Good afternoon."

And he did at length fairly go; and Alan reseated himself by the glowing fire, endeavouring in its genial warmth to find courage for the plunge that was before him. He took Jane's letter from his pocket, opened it and read:—

"DEAR ALAN,

Your letter, your too kind letter

cannot be answered in writing; you must come and speak to me. I give you a long journey, but I cannot be satisfied without it. I will not say more, except to thank you at this time and ever for the kindness and affection you have shown me.

“Your affectionate Cousin,

“JANE SINCLAIR.”

It read like a reprieve. Alan sighed a sigh, not now of pain, but of inexpressible relief, and then a dream sweet and vivid passed before his mental eyes, and gradually absorbed every faculty. He saw Mary free; Mary his own; Mary in the home which was his, and which, lit by the light of her fancied presence, became suddenly dear. He saw her flitting about and bringing all things into brightness

and beauty, winning all hearts, soothing all sorrows. . . . And here there came another thrill of delight as he added that with Mary here, Jane could return, and be at home, and happy again for ever.

But at this point another recollection came; it shot swift and sudden through his brain. He remembered that slight blush on Jane's cheek, which when he had once suggested this idea, had attracted his attention. What had it meant? Was it possible; was her letter not a reprieve; did she, could she care for him?

The letter was read again and again, and at every perusal his terrors rose. If she had meant to refuse him, would she not have said so without delay? Had he not often heard the saying that she who deliberates is lost? Was it for *his* sake

that she declined to speak? Was he then bound to her? Was Mary as far removed from him as ever?

Question rose upon question, till he was mad with thinking, till the power of thought was lost; and in strong necessity, he recalled Dr. Oliver's advice, and acted upon it. Endeavouring as far as possible by active bodily movement, to still the tide of mental activity, he walked far and rapidly; climbing a high hill, and then standing in the keen yet misty air of the twilight hour, to be invigorated for the momentous decision to which he must come.

But he returned home, to enter anew into the conflict—a conflict which lasted all the sleepless night through that followed.

But during the year that had passed,

during the practice of constant kindness, under the influence of constant self-restraint, controlling thought that he might benefit others, Alan's nature had insensibly risen higher. It was true, there was a something which held him back from that which must be the germ of all practical goodness,—submission to the will and dispensations of God; it was true he did not, could not resign himself into the hands of his Father in Heaven, therefore could have no true peace in his soul, or guidance for his life. But there are degrees in all things. Alan had certainly endeavoured, in a degree, to do his duty to God and man; and a sincere endeavour, though imperfect, works a change in the soul. He *could* not now, as a year and a half before he would have done, trample on all impediments,

put aside all considerations, for the one bliss of gaining Mary for his own. It was no matter of argument, it was feeling. He *could* not now put truth and honour aside. If he found Jane ready to accept him, he was bound to her. His own words, his own act had bound him.

Such was the decision with which, after a night of warfare, he rose in the morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Little thinkest thou, poor flower,
Whom I have watched six or seven days,
And seen thy birth, and seen what every hour,
Gave to thy growth thee to this height to raise.
Little thinkest thou
That it will freeze anon, and that I shall
To-morrow find thee fallen.”

DONNE.

THE journey to Edinburgh was long :
and having been delayed in the early
part of the day, Alan did not reach it
till night. It was too late to intrude at

Miss Marchmont's, and thankful for a respite in his present worn-out and agitated frame of mind, he went to bed to gather courage for the morrow.

Some increase of courage came, and having sent word to Jane that he would be with her at eleven, he at the appointed hour bent his steps to her abode.

But his heart sank as he approached it, sank still more as he entered it. Its dreariness made a very painful appeal to his feelings of kindness and compassion. In the beautiful city of Edinburgh, there was no need to have a dismal abode; but Miss Marchmont had a dismal soul, and loved to complain; she made from taste a gloomy choice, and then embittered her life with complaints of the choice she had made.

Her house was in a narrow street,

where the tall houses cast deep shadows downwards. The house itself was tall and narrow, with narrow windows, narrow rooms, and narrow and steep stairs. Accustomed in his military experience to many close and curious quarters, Alan yet shrank from this abode, and when he thought of what it must be to Jane, accustomed to the free and airy life of her mountain home, his resolution, from mere compassion, had reached a height which for the moment absorbed every other consideration.

He was shown into a back room on the ground floor, which had evidently been given up to Jane. But though all that could have been done in the way of embellishment, had been done and with taste, it was still a small, dull room, looking out on walls and roofs which intercepted much of the light.

She came to him there without delay, and the agitation of their first meeting was prevented by the words which almost unconsciously burst from Alan's lips, "My dear Jane! what a dreary place!"

The voice was kind, but the words fell painfully on Jane's ear.

Let it be said at once that she had summoned Alan to read his heart. *Her* heart was his. Only since the reception of his letter had the unacknowledged feelings been allowed to live and grow, but in the parting from him, in the thought of parting from him, what her feelings were, had become startlingly clear. But it was one thing to have them, and another to accept his proffered hand. She must read his heart, and penetrate into the causes of that proffer before she could be won. The one cause of compassion for her she

suspected, and his first words grated on her ear.

She drew slightly back, and answered sedately, "Yes, it is dreary, but in many ways it may be improved; and after a time I have no doubt my aunt will be anxious to move."

"I was not thinking of her, Jane; I was thinking of you."

The smile, the glance, the affectionate speech, this time told, or seemed to tell, a different tale. A blush of hope flitted over Jane's cheeks; agitated tears sprang into her eyes. Alan looked at her with dismay. But only for an instant was her part, the part she had set herself to play, forgotten. She passed him quickly, stirred the fire into a blaze, and in the two seconds occupied by these operations, recovered herself.

“Are you not cold, Alan?” she asked, as if the honours of her room absorbed her; and she pulled an arm-chair to the fire, and invited him to sit down.

His suspicions vanished, and obeying her, he seated himself in the seat proposed. Inadvertently; for when seated, he found the light, such as it was, playing full on his face, while Jane retired into the shadow.

They had both seated themselves. The bustle of the entrance was over; and the business of the visit was to begin. There was a moment's awkward pause, and then Alan, anxious at once to relieve her and himself, began. “You have given me a long journey, Jane, when a few words would have been sufficient. Do not think I grudge it, but tell me now for what purpose your summons was sent.”

“That I might talk to you, Alan. When

your happiness—yours and mine both—was at stake,—a letter was not enough.”

“Have you considered the contents of my letter?” he asked, and he bent forward and looked intently at her, but in the shadow where she sat the play of countenance was unseen.

“Yes, Alan. But we both have felt and suffered too much to allow an impulse to guide us in such matters. There are other considerations.”

“I do not understand you,” he said, gravely, but over his brow nevertheless a faint flush of comprehension stole.

“You shall understand me fully,” she said, studying his countenance, and drawing with a sigh her own deductions from its changes. “When I received your letter, the dreariness of my life here, the longing for your society, the longing for a

breath of the air of Loch-Art, so agitated my mind, that in my agitation—had I yielded to impulse—I should have accepted your offer without a word. But would such considerations as those have been worthy of you or me, Alan, in a matter like this? Would you have been satisfied with such in your wife? Have I not cause to feel shame that any thoughts of my present life, any desire to escape from it, should have swayed me at such a time?" She paused, and looking fixedly at him, continued: "There is but one consideration that should guide us in our decision. Are we dearer to each other than all else on earth; or at least honestly desiring to be so?"

Alan coloured so deeply that he was angry and annoyed; and replied with petulance, "You must answer for yourself,

Jane. Is it possible, can *he* still be dear?"

"No, no, no," she cried, starting up, her countenance kindling, her eyes flashing with a moment's passion, "dare not to think it. But not the less," she instantly added, reseating herself, and speaking, or endeavouring to speak, composedly, "that sting in my heart has robbed it of hope, and life, and freshness. I am not what I was, nor what I would be. But you, Alan," and again she bent forward, speaking softly and looking anxiously at him, "Have you no one dearer, far dearer; at *this* very moment dearer than I could ever be?"

"You have seen this newspaper, Jane," Alan said, tremulously, and drawing the paper from his pocket.

"No, what is it?" she asked, eagerly

and fearfully, and almost snatched it from his hand.

“Mr. Merivale is dead,” he replied, in the same low, agitated tone.

Jane opened the paper; stooped her head over it, and so remained buried in thought. In that instant, hope died, and if there is a sickness of the heart in hope deferred, there is faintness in the moment of its death. She sat silent, unable to collect her swimming senses.

Alan watched her with terror. “She loves me!” he said, and the thought was agony.

But again his terrors were put to flight. After a pause which he could not break she raised her eyes, looked at him and said, “Oh! Alan, you are not glad?”

“Glad! Jane,” he repeated, awed,

startled, and amazed, his thoughts turning from her to himself as if for the first time that question was put to his conscience.

“Oh! no, not glad. My feelings are strange, but not glad. A year ago I might have been; I might have been a murderer then; but not glad now. Glad, perhaps, that Mary is free, not that he is dead.”

“Then God grant you happiness with her, dear Alan. You have loved her truly, and I know she well deserves your love.”

“But Jane,” he said, with a gasp, “I cannot bear to think of your dreary life.”

There was a moment's proud flash in her eyes, a moment's bitterness in her heart, as she inwardly said, “I knew it was but compassion,” and one less practised in un-

selfishness than herself, might by one bitter word, have poisoned the release they gave. The temptation to speak proudly was strong, but it was mastered.

“I told you, Alan,” she replied, quietly, “that my life would improve. My Aunt begins to bear with me, and in time will do more; if once I can make her love me, I shall have no cause to complain. To be with her is, I think, where my duty calls me, and so thinking I am happier here than I should be in a freer life. I told you my first impulse, that you might know all my weakness; but I think, I trust, it was an impulse on which I never should have acted. Marriage is too solemn a thing to be undertaken, unless when the whole heart goes with the vows. I should, have disappointed you, and you would have disappointed me. We are happier

as we are. You have been more than a brother to me, and I know you will be brother and guardian still."

"Do you speak from your heart, Jane?"

"From my heart," she replied, raising her eyes full to his face; and from her heart the words came. Her spirit was far too high to cling to an unwilling affection.

Alan was satisfied, and banishing all sensations of discomfort remained with her in conversation; entering with cruel kindness upon all the trials of her life.

With a cruel kindness; for when he left her she laid her throbbing head on her hands and bade farewell with a breaking heart to her last dream of earthly happiness. She was four-and-thirty, but at

thirty-four the heart is as warm, and the affections are stronger than in the days of romantic youth.

CHAPTER IX.

“The little peevish perplexities of this ignorant life, mists which the morning without a night only can clear away.”

LITTLE DORRIT.

“READ on, Mary ; my time is short, and I have much to learn.”

And Mary did read on ; weary in body but unwearied, nay joyful in mind, because those holy thoughts which, through trial, had become the life of her own soul, now in death were giving life to her husband.

We must go backward for two months ; to the middle of August, at Hamburg.

Mr. Merivale lay on a couch beside a window in a small room. The window was open, and a fresh breeze from one of those lakes round which so much of the town of Hamburg is built, played about the room, and on his brow ; but it would not allay or arrest the fever that consumed him. He looked parched and withered ; his small features,—his thin figure, were shrunk into dimensions, which left him, shadow as he had always been, the shadow only of himself. The same intense melancholy shone in his dark eyes, but in spite of the restlessness of fever, a quieter look was on his lips. Something more of submission, something even of hope, had entered that gnawing, bitter heart, and hushed it to rest.

By his side, reclining in an arm-chair, Mary sat with a Bible in her hands. She looked ill. Her face was thin, her complexion transparent and pale, and few traces of her former lovely colouring and freshness of beauty were left. But Mary's beauty, the highest part of it, did not depend on health or colouring. It was the same sweet face, the same loving look, the same serene goodness and pity that beamed from her soft eyes, on her dying husband, and on which he rested his eyes as if he would drink its sweetness into his soul.

Mary's life at Hamburg had improved, yet not greatly improved from what it had been in England. Mr. Merivale had too long yielded himself to the evil spirit that possessed him, to cast it out by light efforts. *That* kind possibly could only have

gone out by praying and fasting, and he was too little conscious of the enormous evil to which he was a prey, to make enormous efforts to overcome it.

When he had Mary all to himself, when he knew that her happiness must depend on his treatment, he did intend, he did a thousand times say to himself, that his love and care *should* make her happy. But it only needed a look of sadness on her brow, or a look of joy at the reception of a letter from England, to banish every resolve, and to fill his mind with hateful thoughts of jealousy and suspicion. She could scarcely speak of England or her family, but he found poison in her words ; less spoken out and discharged, than fed upon and digested for hours afterwards. He had his excuse, for he knew what *he* called love ; his all-en-

grossing love for Mary; *that* she had not to give him, and he was jealous even of the children she smiled on as she walked in the street.

As the year advanced there were moments, nay hours of improvement; moments and sometimes hours when he grew soft, and a soft smile would play over his lips. It was when he thought of the future; of a child in his home; of one, perhaps Mary's image, who would love him first, and love him wholly.

Mary cherished these softer moments as a lover of flowers cherishes the buds in the early spring; cherished them in him, and stored them for comfort in her own heart. They gave her the hope and promise of a summer time yet to come, when he would no longer repel but invite her cares; when he would allow that love,

which in a heart like hers could not but be to be found, to come forth from its hiding place.

But these hopes were cut off. In mercy probably to both cut off. It was a hard life they both led, and at five-and-thirty man is a stubborn thing; even when he would with all his heart, he finds that long-indulged habits of ill cannot be put off. They spring up ever new, and are ever bearing new fruits.

The fever that had so long preyed in his veins became at last an actual fever. For nearly three weeks the strength of manhood fought with it, but in vain. Mr. Merivale must die.

Weakness and sickness have a power, by God's gift, stronger than strength. They break down barriers no strength could have broken; they melt hardness on which coals

of fire might have been heaped in vain. So it was now. In weakness Mr. Merivale's evil spirit departed from him, and his heart became soft and gentle as the heart of a child. And then came forth from their place, trampled down into the earth of his earthly nature, the seeds his mother had sown in youth; came forth and grew up into flowers with rapid growth. It was no strange God to whom he turned in his penitence, but the Father to whom his infant prayers had been directed, and whom, when the veil fell from his heart, he recognized as the God and Saviour who had led him and borne with him all his life long.

He saw death approaching, and but for one unutterable grief, saw it, with humility, indeed, but with quietness. Mary! she still stood between him and heaven.

Whilst she read to him on this day his eyes rested on *her*, and his ears drank in the words with double joy, because they were sounded by her voice. She had read long, and after a time, for human nature has its bounds which even the most intense desire cannot pass, her voice became hoarse and weak ; and at length, for he was still slow to perceive the needs of others, Mr. Merivale perceived it.

“ Stop, now, Mary,” he said, gently, “ you are tired.”

“ I shall be rested in a moment,” she replied, “ I am so happy to read,” and she held the Bible still in her hand.

“ Let me care for you this once, Mary ; I have not cared enough, and have not time to care now.”

She put down the Book ; and being weak

and worn, tears at his kind words fell down her cheek.

His eyes rested upon her. Those tears caused him joy, because he saw they were *his* words that had caused them.

“Mary,” at last, he said, “you have been the angel of my life; and to you this reward has I think been given; you have saved my soul from death. Be comforted by this for all you have borne. But I; what have I been to you? Harsh, cruel as I was, you must have doubted my love, and you could not love me; but I did love you, Mary—love you! God knows how I loved you; try to believe it when I am gone for ever.”

Mary rose from where she reclined. “Do not cloud these last hours,” she said, gently, by any more distrust. I *know* you loved me, and *I* love you.”

She stooped down, and pressed her lips on his brow.

“You love me, Mary! She loves me!” he cried, clasping his hands in agitated prayer. “Oh, God, and must I die!” The dew of death started on his forehead, so great was the agony of that conviction.

And from Mary’s eyes tears of penitence and regret fell fast. Often in months gone by had she felt that those words would soothe and heal his heart, and her lips stubborn in truth, could not utter them; and now they fell without effort, and unbidden from her tongue. But it was too late.

Too late to heal, not too late to soothe. The agony passed, and the blessed conviction that he had won Mary’s love at last, stole like balm into his heart and brain.

He looked at her again, and held out his hand. "Forgive me, Mary, my dearest, for all that I have made you suffer. I give you pain, but I am selfish. I would have my forgiveness from your lips."

"It is all forgotten," Mary said, in a broken voice. "Can you say the same to me?"

"No, Mary. Nothing concerning you, my blessed angel, can be forgotten. But you never made me suffer. It was my own restless heart, but it is over now. Both our sufferings are over now; only, Mary, I am weak; sometimes when you clasp your child in your arms remember me."

Mary kissed the hand that clasped her own, and her tears fell fast upon it. She was so weakened by watching and anxiety that she could not command herself to answer

him. But he needed no words. He felt she loved and regretted him, and died in peace.

CHAPTER X.

“ Mary ! ten chequered years have passed
Since we beheld each other last ;
Yet, Mary, I remember thee,
Nor canst thou have forgotten me.”

SOUTHEY.

ALAN SINCLAIR returned to Loch-Art. Some business, some arrangements in which his tenants were interested, required his attention, and now that Mary was within his reach, a superstitious feeling regarding the

strict performance of every duty took possession of his mind. He wished to make himself worthy of the blessing.

But as soon as the business was accomplished, he hastened to London in search of Mary. Let it not be supposed with any views of then pressing his suit ; but simply to show himself her friend. In her cares, of poverty or weakness, or whatever might be her lot, to show that he still cared for her.

He went to the old house in Lincoln's Inn Fields to make his inquiries. He preferred this method to that of exciting observation in her family.

The house was let, and the servant who opened the door could give him no direct information. Letters occasionally came for Mr. Merivale, but all were forwarded to Mr. Lyndsay's, Albany Street, Regent's Park.

Thither, therefore, Alan bent his steps, and did not regret that it was the middle of the day, when he might escape a personal interview with Frank.

The door of the house in Albany Street was opened by a large boy in the dress of a page. Alan inquired in some surprise for Mr. Lyndsay, and was informed that he was out; but Mrs. Lyndsay was at home.

“Is Mr. Lyndsay married?” Alan asked.

“Yes, sir, these six months,” said the boy, in an injured tone.

“I will not trouble Mrs. Lyndsay. You can, I have no doubt, give me the information I require. Can you tell me where Mrs. Merivale is?”

“Please, sir, yes; she’s still at Hamburg.”

“Could you give me her direction?”

“Oh, yes, sir; I posted a letter to-day,” and he gave the direction as desired.

Alan wrote it on a card. "Is she there alone?" he next asked.

"No, sir; my master's mother is staying with her. I know that, because I post a letter for her sometimes."

"And is Mrs. Merivale quite recovered?"

"I can't say, sir" — with a solemn look, "I suppose you know, sir, she's a widow?"

"Yes. I meant had she recovered since the birth of her child."

"I can't say, sir."

Alan more than satisfied, elated with the information he had gained, slipped a slight *douceur* into the hands of his companion, in gratitude for his communications.

He then departed. The boy stood looking after him as he walked down the street, and at last relieved his mind by remarking "Of all the coves that come to this house,

that 'ere's the one for me." He then—having before her marriage been a *protégé* of his young mistress—thought it requisite to go and communicate to her all that had occurred, not omitting the important conclusion.

She repeated it to Frank, on which he rubbed his hands and looked very wise; but no entreaties could draw from him the cause of those demonstrations. His extraordinary discretion had prevented him from revealing Mary's story even to his wife, and he was too proud of his discretion to give way now. "You will know some day, May" (for after days and nights of intense thought, he had at length decided on that denomination for Mary Davis), "and that must content you. Don't tease me with questions now."

It was two months after Mr. Merivale's

death that Lord Sinclair arrived at Hamburg. He went at once to the Vice-Consul for news of Mary, being uncertain how he should proceed. The Consul was a good-natured, vulgar soul, who had met Mr. Merivale, he said, several times on business, and as a mark of respect had attended his funeral. Did he know Mrs. Merivale? Alan inquired. He replied that he had seen her at church, and had once jested with Mr. Merivale on the subject of her beauty. But as his remarks were not well received, and as he understood Mr. Merivale was jealous and kept her secluded, he had proceeded no further; for, he concluded, with a roar of laughing, "I have no wish to excite jealousy in any man, dead or alive."

In answer to farther questioning, he said he understood that Mrs. Merivale had been

delicate since her confinement. If Lord Sinclair could point out to him any means of being of use to her, he was always anxious,—with another roar,—to be of use to a pretty woman; or, indeed, any woman, be she pretty or not. And as this was all the information he could gain, Alan thought it best to call at Mary's house himself.

The door was opened by bright, clean English girl, who curtsied low, and smiled at the sight of Alan. There was such evident recognition in her face that he could not help asking her if she remembered him.

“Oh! yes, sir, I saw you twice when you called at the cottage.”

He coloured slightly, and then inquired after Mrs. Lyndsay and Mary.

Mrs. Lyndsay was quite well, and Mrs.

Merivale and the baby were doing well also, but they were not allowed to go out.

Alan then said that he did not wish to trouble either Mrs. Lyndsay or Mrs. Merivale by asking to see them, but begged the girl to give his card to Mrs. Merivale, and to say that he was staying at Hamburg for a day or two, and should be glad if he could be of any use to them.

“ I think you may, sir,” the girl replied, “ the master of this house is behaving very bad to my mistress, and frets her a good bit.”

He caught eagerly at this suggestion, and said he would wait while she delivered his message.

The girl went up stairs to a small room where Mary and her mother were

sitting. She put the card into Mary's hand, with the message that the gentleman would be very glad to be of use.

Mary looked at it, and her colour deepened. "I will think, Hannah," she said to the girl. "Show him into the dining-room for a minute."

As soon as the door closed she turned to her mother. "It is Lord Sinclair's card, mother. He is in Hamburg."

"Oh!" Mrs. Lyndsay replied, with great difficulty, but much propriety, restraining a broad grin.

"I think he might be of use; of great use, mother. If he would speak to that man, it would save us so much trouble. What do you think?"

"Why, Mary, I think he might be of the very greatest use, only . . ."

"Only what, mother?"

“Only, Mary, I think, considering, considering all things, you know, it might be more proper, if anything is to be done, that I should speak to him.”

“No, mother, if I ask him to do this thing, I will do it myself.”

“Very well, Mary dear, I dare say you know best. I think in *my* time it would have been considered more proper for me to do it; but things change.”

Mary did not seem to heed her. She rose, and through a half-closed door disappeared into another room. In a moment she re-appeared with her sleeping child in her arms.

“Good gracious me, Mary! are you going to show him the baby?” Mrs. Lyndsay asked, in bewilderment.

“No, mother! it is only for company,”

and having wrapped the child in a shawl, Mary left the room.

Alan was waiting in the room into which he had been shown. He had little expectation of seeing Mary, and when the door opened turned slowly from the window; more slowly still, when he saw who it was, he advanced. His heart stood still; but he was on his guard against any show of emotion. They met in perfect quietness on both sides.

Mary had recovered her beauty, which was subdued, not hidden by her widow's dress. She looked pale, and, as the Consul had said, "delicate," but there was something higher and more spiritual than ever yet had been in her countenance; so, at least, Alan thought as his eyes rested upon her.

As soon as she had shaken hands with

him she put the sleeping child on a small sofa, and then again turning to him, began with calmness and openness, "My maid told me you had offered to be of use to us. It is very kind of you. There is a thing which troubles me, and which I believe a few words from you may set to rights."

"You may be sure I shall be glad to be of use," he replied, endeavouring to speak as indifferently as she did. "Your maid mentioned something ; it was about the landlord of this house, I think."

"My mother and I are both so ignorant of business," Mary began again, "that we do not know how far he has a *right* to turn us out. I fancy he has an offer for it that he wishes to accept, and thinks he may do as he

pleases with women. But neither my child nor I have been out, and we are besides so strange here that it would be inconvenient and worse to move. In short I dread it, and if you could do anything with him it would be a great relief."

"I am sure there will be no difficulty," he said; "can you tell me where I shall find him?"

Mary crossed the room for a pencil, then wrote a direction on a card. "I dread a removal so much," she added, as she wrote, "that I had made up my mind this morning to write to the Vice-Consul, and ask him to interfere; but I had much rather be indebted to a friend than to a stranger."

There was something that troubled Alan in the ease and fearlessness in her speech.

It overset in some degree his self-control, and when, as he held out his hand to take the card, she said again, "It is very kind of you, and I don't know how to thank you enough," he replied in a tremulous voice, "Not kind; oh! Mary, if you knew the pleasure it is to serve you!"

A faint colour passed over her cheek, but she said nothing, and drew slightly backwards towards her child.

The movement might have warned him to be still; but it agitated instead of calming him.

"May I come back and tell you my success?" he inquired, timidly.

"I think not," she gently said.

"Oh! Mary I would not offend."

She was silent for a moment, then said in the same soft tone, and without

looking up, "Thank you, I should be glad to hear that all was safe, but you must not call me by that name."

"I will not," he said, but though he said he would not, he was growing mad with desire to know what she meant; with fear lest some dreadful meaning should be in her words. He tried, however, to speak indifferently and asked, "Do you stay long at Hamburg?"

"I hope not, but that is what I cannot tell. I think England would do my child good, but I dare not move it without leave. I hope to go in a fortnight, but I cannot be certain."

"Shall you and Mrs. Lyndsay be alone for the journey?"

"Yes. I think so. Neither my father nor brother can come."

"You are hardly fit. You want care.

I shall be here in a fortnight again. You will, you must let me see you over."

"I think not," she replied, in the same low, gentle tone. "Thank you, but I think not."

"You do not think I should forget myself. I would not trouble you, Mary! Forgive me; but I would not trouble you with my presence. I would but see you safe."

"You are very kind, but it is better not. I think we shall manage very well."

He was afraid to press further, and yet his inner man was in a state of turmoil which made it impossible to him to acquiesce. He had a feeling that she intended henceforth to shut him from her presence, and he could not be still. He

took up his hat, however, which he had laid down, and went towards her holding out his hand."

"Where shall you be when in England?" he asked.

"At Cleeve; we are to live with Miss Merivale."

"I shall hope to see you there some day," he said, trying in vain to speak lightly, to speak without timidity. "You will not forbid me to come there."

"At some time, perhaps," she replied, "not now; at some future time I shall be glad to see you."

He had better have been satisfied, but her calm tone agonized him. He could not leave her thus.

"You think of me as a friend, Mary?" he asked, pleadingly.

“Yes, as a friend,” she replied, in that low tone.

“And more than a friend?”

“No, never more.”

“Never?” he cried, madly.

“No, never more.”

He stood so aghast that he seemed unable to speak another word. Mary sat down on the sofa by her child, and stooped over it for an instant. She then turned again to him, and said, “Oh! Alan, I have so dreaded you would think of this. I am almost thankful that so soon it may be set at rest and for ever.”

“At rest for ever?” he repeated in the same bewildered tone. “You cannot mean what you say.” Then recovering himself, “I have been very wrong; I never meant at such a time as this to speak as I

have done. Forgive me. You frightened me, and I forgot myself. I will leave you now, and intrude no more till you yourself give me leave."

"Stay, Alan," she said. "It is as you say no time for such words; yet, as they have been spoken, let me say more. I would, indeed, set this question at rest; and since I am able, I am, I repeat it, thankful to spare you so many months of expectation and anxiety. What you think of, can never be."

"But why, Mary?"

"If I had been a good wife," she replied, while tears fell heavily down her cheek, "I do not know, but possibly I might not have refused; but it was not so. I was guilty; guilty in my thoughts; and if I do this thing I should turn my whole past life into sin."

“This is superstition, Mary. It is unworthy of you.”

“No, not superstition,” she said, with quickness, “but my conscience. That warns me that this should not be, and never, never again, will I distrust its voice. Urge me not, Alan; it never can—it never shall.”

“You forget me and all I have suffered,” he cried, with warmth. “Is it not selfish—is it not unlike yourself to consider only your own part? Oh! Mary, I suffered once—can you of your own will inflict such suffering again?”

“But, Alan,” she said, in a tremulous voice, “were you guiltless?”

He stood again aghast, for there rose up before him the remembrance of that time when, as he had said to Jane, he might have been a murderer. He stood for a moment

transfixed before her, but then another recollection came, and he replied,

“I do not say I have been guiltless—I dare not say it. I was sorely tried. But perhaps you will think me less guilty, when I own to you that I have sought comfort for my misery. That I did ask another to be my wife, and was rejected by her.”

Mary was human, and at this confession her heart for an instant sank. Her eyelids drooped, and the lashes trembled on her cheek. Alan thought he saw a coming hope and triumph, and made a step nearer to her; but when she raised her eyes at his approach, it was to say, “Oh! Alan, I am so thankful!”

“Thankful, Mary, thankful that in my misery I madly went to another for comfort, and was rejected?”

“Yes, dear Alan, for I see hope for the

future. And now the worst is past. I can bear"—she hesitated, and her lips quivered; but, recovering herself, she went on—"all things but your loneliness, and now that dread is past. At some time I trust you will be happy."

"Happy, Mary, when you yourself shut out happiness from me," he said, bitterly. "And you deceive yourself," he continued, looking fixedly at her; "in after years you yourself may regret."

"I may," she replied, gently, while another tear fell heavily from her eyes, "for I am weak; but I trust in God that I shall not. I *know* that I do what is right, and so knowing I put my trust in Him for the future. There could have been no blessing on our marriage. Dear Alan, forgive me, and farewell." She raised her child in her arms, and held out her

hand to him ; he was so taken by surprise, that he took it, held it, and released it, with equal unconsciousness, and it was not till she had hastened from the room, that the torrent of persuasive words he might have spoken came to his mind and to his lips. Then they did come,— words that would have moved rocks, arguments that would have swayed hearts of stone. So he felt, at least ; but it was too late. Mary was gone.

Yet even then he could not bring himself to believe it was over ; that Mary did actually mean that they were parted for ever ; and the remembrance of the business on which she had employed him came like a flash of hope to his distracted mind. When that was done he would write. He would implore her pardon for his madness, and assure her that years of

penance and probation would be as nothing, would seem like the seven years of Jacob, but a few days, if only she would relent at last.

He went more cheerfully on his business, and found little difficulty in bringing the man to reason. It was as Mary thought. He supposed he could easily impose on two women, "unprotected females," as they seemed; and the mere sight of Alan, and the sound of the name of an English Lord brought him to submission and politeness.

This affair settled, Alan returned home to inform Mary of what had been done, and then to pour out his heart before her.

She replied to him in a few words; grateful, kind, affectionate, regretful words, not entering upon the arguments he put

forward, but making her own decision,
her unalterable decision, perfectly clear.

And this was the end.

CHAPTER XI.

“What art thou ?

I scarcely know thee, we so seldom meet !

I am a name that was, a glory passed,

A voice of woe that from the sepulchre

And grave of passion speak to warn mankind.”

COUNTESS OF ESSEX.

It was not likely that the sight of Mary and that renewed intercourse with her should heal Alan's heart. The blow she had inflicted was very great, and though there was something in her decision to

which his own inmost conscience—at least in solitary self-questioning moments—responded something, the rectitude of which his own best and highest thoughts approved, yet he was not in the mood to listen to these. He combated it and them, and added to his misery by his assurance that her scruples were needless scruples. It was again the hand of man, and not the hand of God, that separated them, and he could not submit.

The thoughts of Loch-Art, of Dr. Oliver, even of Jane herself, excited various mingled feeling of distaste and dread. *There* he could not return, and having a whole world before him where to choose, he could not fix on any definite spot where he could abide with pleasure. To some minds, mere change, rambling about among new scenes, brings dissipation, and

with it dissipation of regrets; but there are other minds who need an object to stimulate, and only when an ultimate object is in view can take pleasure in desultory wandering. This latter was Alan's case. A return to the army was the sole thing on which his mind could fix with pleasure, and since this could not be he lingered on in an uncertain, restless, miserable frame of mind, indulging hate to all human beings except that one on whom his soul was set.

He lingered on at Hamburg. At length, though reluctantly, he wrote to Jane and told her of the failure of his hopes. It was a triumph of his better and kindly feelings over his bitter ones, and the mere act soothed him. Yet he recoiled from the remembrance of his cousin, as from one who had injured him. His momen-

tary faithlessness to Mary haunted him like a nightmare, and in his present morbid state of mind, he looked on his failure as the proper reward for that aberration.

Jane's answer roused him from this mood. It was earnest and sympathizing as were all her words; and written in a style so frank and cousinly that the feelings of an injury done, of her having a claim upon him, vanished into air. She seemed surprised at Mary's decision, but said Alan must not be angry if she owned she understood it. It was one of those cases when the decision could not fail to be charged with unnecessary scrupulosity, but those who had mentally suffered, above all who had suffered in their conscience, could alone understand how an act easy and sinless to others

might be guilty and dangerous to them. Into Alan's future plans she also entered heartily; reminding him that more than once he had expressed a wish to return to India, and adding from herself, that she could hardly understand how a man able to travel could do otherwise than wish to visit Palestine.

Her suggestions gave the necessary spring to his drooping spirits. He had visited most parts of the world, but he had never been in the East. Thither he bent his steps with the intention of proceeding overland to India in the following year. He wrote from Hamburg to Dr. Oliver, requesting him to give advice to the steward, on matters of extraordinary importance, and suggesting that, in case of any difficulties of decision, Miss Sinclair should be consulted.

He then went on his way, and for a twelvemonth wandered in strange lands, sometimes in solitude, sometimes falling in with parties of travellers, sometimes cheered, sometimes weary of himself, and of life.

But Alan's nature was essentially domestic, and even when roused and cheered by the strange sights and customs he saw he was longing for home and repose, and for duty. For duty, and the tie of duty, more than all else. For some higher law than his own inclinations to guide him.

“Me this unchartered freedom tires,
I feel the weight of chance desires.”

Many have felt this, and said it in their own words, and many and strange have been the ties to which men have in consequence submitted. And Alan longed for

some such tie with a longing which, though at first unconsciously, pointed to a great step to be taken in the future.

This longing, after about a year, reached that point when it became a pain, and suddenly breaking off from a party with which he was engaged to proceed, he turned his face homewards; and after an absence of a year and a quarter arrived in February at Loch-Art.

The first keen sensations of pleasure which he had known for three years were those with which he set his foot on his own soil, and entered his own door. That home which had been almost a burden to him when he left it, he now found dear, and his eyes glanced lightly and brightly about him, as he thought of improvements to be made, and kind-

nesses to be offered, and duties to be done. The welcome of the peasantry as he passed along, the welcome of the servants who met him as their very dear Lord, filled his heart with rapture, and prepared him to seek for peace and happiness at home.

“Where is Dr. Oliver?” he inquired of Donald, on the evening of his arrival, surprised that he had not been the first to welcome him.

“He left home yesterday morning, my Lord,” Donald replied, “I think Mrs. Oliver said he had been sent for to Edinburgh.”

A vague sensation of uneasiness crossed Alan’s mind.

“Sent for to Edinburgh! What should Dr. Oliver do there?” he asked abruptly.

Donald could not say.

In an hour his vague uneasiness became a definite fear, and though there was snow on the ground he walked down to Dr. Oliver's cottage.

It was nine o'clock, and Mademoiselle Melanie, tired of a solitary evening, was thinking of retiring to rest when Alan entered. She was totally unchanged, except that, to mark her matronly state, a small cap had been tacked to the back of her head. The long curls remained; and were shaken with the old coquettish air, as Alan offered her his congratulations on her marriage, and inquired after her husband.

She had hardly time, however, to open her lips, and satisfy him, before her one opportunity for speech was gone; for a gig drew up at the door, and Dr. Oliver himself entered the house.

“A pretty day’s work you have given me, my love,” he said, as she flew out to greet him. “To Edinburgh and back in, let me see, forty hours. There are not many husbands who would have taken that trouble, I can tell you.”

“Quarante heures, mon ami, est-il possible? Que je vous remercie! Que vous êtes bon,” and then restraining her gratitude, and his boasting, she whispered that Lord Sinclair was in the parlour.

This was much more important to Dr. Oliver than his wife’s greetings, and he hastened from her and shook Alan’s hand with delight.

“Well, my Lord!” examining his face, with eyes keen as ever, though bloodshot with the bitter cold of the air, “better, I see; heart-ache cured—that’s well—wonderful fellows foreign doctors to be

sure," and he rubbed his blue cold hands and took a pinch of snuff.

"And where have you been, Dr. Oliver?" Alan said, extricating himself from his unpleasant examinations. "As you did not come to see me, I was obliged to come and see you."

"Ah, my lord, thereby hangs a tale. Mademoiselle Melanie, will you be good enough to leave us," and the obedient wife curtsayed to Alan, shook her curls, and departed.

"Miss Sinclair sent for me, my Lord. She wanted advice, poor soul, and she was forced to apply to me."

Alan's conscience pricked him. "Advice on what subject?" he asked.

"That young rascal, my Lord; not so very young now. He has been persecuting her."

“Mr. Alexander?” Alan said, indignantly.

“Yes, my Lord; persecuting her with requests for money, and offers of marriage, and I don’t know what. By letter, my Lord, only by letter; but between her fears, and her wish to relieve him from want, she was sorely perplexed, poor soul, and at length she applied to me.”

“Why did she not write to me?” Alan said, in the same indignant tone. “Who should be her guardian but me?”

“Ah! who indeed? But, my very good Lord, if she had written to every capital in Europe, she would scarcely have found you. A wandering guardian is as good as no guardian at all.”

“And what has been done? What have you advised?”

“I wrote him a letter, my Lord, which

I hope will settle *him*. As Miss Sinclair was anxious on the subject, I said that if he refrained from annoying her, and applied to me, I would undertake that something should be done to relieve his present distress; but that if he annoyed Miss Sinclair any further, your Lordship was about to return, and his case should be referred to your judgment."

"That was right," Alan said, warmly. "There is no fear, I suppose, of his troubling her in person?"

"Why, no, my Lord. I believe if he was seen on Scottish ground, there would be a hundred officers after him in the twinkling of an eye. His last letter was dated from Boulogne, and to Boulogne I wrote."

"How is my cousin?" Alan inquired.

“She said ‘well,’ my Lord, and that her aunt was growing kind; but, nevertheless, I should say Holy Writ was in the right, and that the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. I fancy that old lady leads her the life of a dog; and, judging by her apparent pleasure in my society, I should presume that agreeable society is *not* a thing in which she is much indulged.”

“I will go to Edinburgh as soon as I have settled a few matters here. May I expect you in the morning, Dr. Oliver?”

“Surely, my Lord, surely. I wish your lordship a very good night,” and Alan walked homewards; and in that homeward walk vague thoughts began to assume a tangible being in his mind. There was something sweet and soothing in the hope of being

a protector; something that invested his cousin with a new interest in his eyes.

Two days were occupied at Loch-Art by business that was pressing. On the third day he set off for Edinburgh, and, in the course of the following morning, arrived at the old dreary house, in the dreary street, and rang at the bell.

“Is Miss Sinclair at home and disengaged?” he inquired of a maid who opened the door. Jane had taken a servant with her on leaving Loch-Art, but the thought of a man in the house, had so upset the old maiden lady, that after a short time she had been forced to dismiss him.

“Miss Sinclair is at home,” the maid said, a stranger to Alan; “but a gentleman is with her.”

“A gentleman!” Alan said, quickly.

“Yes, sir, on very particular business he said. He went up a few minutes ago.”

“I must go up,” Alan said, hastily pushing by her. “Is it up here?” and without waiting for an answer he strode up-stairs, and opened a door that stood at the top of the landing.

The scene that met his eyes within was like a scene in a play.

Behind a chair, her hands resting on the back, Jane stood, pale, stern, and haughty; her air, in theatrical language, that of a tragedy queen.

Opposite to her sat a man, his attitude, as he bent forward, half servile, half insolent. A large cloak was falling over the chair on which he sat, and his under-dress was both shabby and fine. A

quantity of hair ornamented a face that was still handsome, but coarse and repulsive.

“Jane!” Alan cried.

“Alan!” she replied, with almost a scream; and a flash of joy and relief lit up her face.

He was at her side in a moment, and fixing on the intruder a keen glance, he said—

“Who are you, sir, and what is your business here?”

“My business, sir,” he replied, insolently, though with evident uneasiness, “is with that lady, and may I ask by what right you address me thus?”

“By the right of this lady’s guardian and betrothed husband; is it not so, Jane?” and he turned to her.

“Yes, yes,” she replied, scarcely know-

ing what he asked, or what she said.

“That lady, sir,” said the stranger, in the same manner, “is *my* betrothed wife, and I am ready to support my claims. If vows, if promises are of any value, she is mine.”

Jane laid her hand on Alan’s arm, and with a cheek deadly pale, said, “It is false, Alan ; you know how false.”

“Yes, I know. Yes, sir, I know your history, and you had better begone. One word from me” he paused.

The man rose hastily, and, crest-fallen, took up his cloak and hat, and slunk away. Yet, as he went, he turned back, and with gnashing teeth, said to Jane, “Faithlessness, your name is woman.”

“Stay,” she said, going forwards towards him; and he paused at her voice. “God forgive you!” she said, steadily, for the agony you once caused me, but can cause me no more. I have swept you from all my recollections, from all but my prayers that God will have mercy on your soul. Now go, and dare not to see me more.”

He slunk away, and closed the door.

Jane stopped to draw a deep breath, a sigh from her very soul, and then turned to Alan with a glance in which pity was mingled with horror. “Go after him, dear Alan. I would not have him desperate. Give him all that he requires; you know what I would wish. Hasten, or he will be gone.”

He obeyed without a word.

In about ten minutes he returned to her.

“How far I have been right, Jane, in a legal point of view, I don’t know; but I have allowed him to escape. It is as you suppose. He is desperate for want of money, and I have promised in your name that on his application for any *possible* sum, he shall be assisted. It is weak, I know, but since Dr. Oliver had also promised it, it must be done.”

“Thanks, dear Alan. I would not have him want.”

“But I said it must be for the last time, Jane. We will see if anything *can* be done to snatch him from such perdition. Trust to me, I will.”

“Thanks,” she said again, with a gasp of horror and relief.

“And now, Jane,” and his voice and man-

ner changed and softened, "only one word, only tell me; can you repeat what you just now said in haste? Dear Jane, will you be my wife?"

She looked up at him with a startled gaze.

"You did accept me," he said, with a smile, "but you shall be free again. Will you be my wife?"

"Oh! Alan, do you love me?" she asked, in earnest but tremulous tones, "I am not young, I have nothing to win your love, but I could not marry without it. I could not be married from pity."

"From pity, Jane! Yes, I believe it is from pity; pity to myself that I ask it. You know all my heart; you know that there *was*, perhaps *is*, God knows how it is with me . . . and if with that

knowledge you cannot love me enough tell me so truly, and I will put all vain thoughts aside. But if you could rise above the jealousy of a memory, it is to you and you only that I look for happiness in my future life. And not happiness only—Dear Jane, you and you only may help me to cast off my old sinful self, and go forth into a new life.” His tones were too earnest and serious to be misunderstood,—and they were betrothed to each other.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Were the whole known what we uncouth suppose,
Doubtless would beauteous symmetry disclose;
The naked cliff that singly rough remains
In prospect dignifies the fertile plains;
Lead-coloured clouds in scattering fragments seen
Show though in broken views the blue serene;
We pass through want to wealth, through dismal strife
To calm content, through death to endless life.”

R. SAVAGE.

LORD SINCLAIR and Jane were married in the course of the following summer. When the time drew near he wrote to

Mary to tell her of the event. This was the first renewal of intercourse between them, and her answer was in a style so cordial and friendly and affectionate, that a new era in his feelings towards her was opened. He began to look to the possibility of some day seeing her again as a friend, and taking pleasure in such intercourse.

The marriage took place at Edinburgh, and after Jane's removal to Loch-Art, Miss Marchmont followed her there. Since she was always confined to her own room Jane had felt that it was imposing no hard thing on Alan, and he himself, seeing that when the time for separation came, there was uneasiness in Jane's mind at the thoughts of giving up the new duty she had undertaken, made himself the proposal for the change. Miss Marchmont, though

even then unwilling to confess that Jane had become dear, consented with marvellous facility, and went to Loch-Art to live and die.

All things looked peacefully and even smilingly on this marriage; and the promise it gave was of tranquillity and domestic happiness.

Mary, meanwhile, had settled at Cleeve. She came over as Miss Merivale's guest; but shortly after a change took place in the state of her affairs. At the winding up of Mr. Merivale's concerns many shares of an unsaleable kind had remained in his hands, and were looked to by himself with a kind of vague hope in the future. Among these were a large number of shares taken some years before in an Australian Land Company; up to this time they had brought in no profit;

but the finding of gold on some of this land suddenly and wholly altered the state of the case. The shares rose in the market to a price that was astonishing, and when they were at the highest, Captain Lyndsay, who had been left guardian to Mary and her child, sold out, and a sum was realized which placed her in comfort for the rest of her life.

When this change took place Miss Merivale declined to remain the mistress of Cleeve. It had been left by will to Mary and her child, and it was, she said, most fitting, that if able to do so, Mary should at once enter on the possession. To Mary also it seemed most fitting, and she agreed to the proposal, provided Miss Merivale consented to remain as her guest. Shortly afterwards the household was enlarged by the addition of Captain and Mrs. Lyndsay, who

removed from the cottage to take up their abode with Mary. There was some incongruity in the members of her household, but the charm that hung round Mary brought them all into harmony and peace. Miss Merivale lost something of her narrow-mindedness; Mrs. Lyndsay, wrapt in her adoration of Mary's child, filled up her vacant hours with loving cares, and had less and less of time or thought for fretfulness or folly; and Captain Lyndsay, drawn forth from under the cloud of selfishness, emerged into a new life, a life of loving watchfulness over his daughter, and through her into a life of severer scrutiny into himself. He became not the father only, but the friend and companion of Mary's hours, the being on whom, next after her child, her life's happiness hung.

And Cleeve, as may be supposed, received a new life from Mary's hands. Miss Merivale, though remaining melancholy in her own soul, encouraged Mary to this transformation. "It was what my mother and his mother wished. It was what *he* wished in his happy days," and this encouragement added to the delight which Mary took in the embellishment of the old home. Trees were cut down to let in air, and sun, and health; the grounds were brought into order and beauty, and the garden was, when in its summer dress, a sight for its brilliancy and bloom. The little heiress of the old mansion, the sole representative of the name of Merivale, grew up amid brightness and beauty, and though her dark eyes had something of her father's mournfulness, she caught the sweetness of her mother's

smile and her mother's nature, and was no inheritor of the Merivale gloom.

Not many months after Mary's settlement at Cleeve, Mrs. Clifton was seized with a violent return of her attachment to her, and in the following year took her old house in the neighbourhood, and became again the kind friend and cheerful companion. Her love for Mary was indeed no passing thing; it had taken a root in her nature which was a wonder to her own self.

Her first establishment, however, in her new home was clouded by an event which just then occurred, the marriage of Alan. The news reached her only one week after her return, and was then conveyed in a letter from Alan himself, whom she had supposed to be still lingering in foreign climes. He would willingly, when

he thus wrote, have explained to her all that had occurred, and all his feelings, but he refused himself the indulgence, and his letter contained a simple announcement of the fact, and a request for her good wishes.

Poor Mrs. Clifton had again been dreaming and match-making. Locked in the recesses of her bosom, bright visions of the future happiness of Mary and Alan had been stored and cherished; visions doubly bright because they renewed and replaced those old ones which had so signally failed, and which in their failure had given her some of the saddest thoughts and saddest hours she had ever known.

The blow she received was indeed a cruel one. She had supposed Alan to be wandering about, awaiting the moment when

he might in propriety claim his long hoped for bride. She had supposed, she still supposed Mary to be occupied with the same thoughts, and her shock was as great as her hopes had been bright and strong. They only who form and live upon such hopes and plans can guess how great was the disappointment that ensued.

For some days her dread of seeing Mary was so great that she longed to fly the country. Had her landlord been an amiable and conciliatory person she would probably, in her first moments of dismay, have requested him to free her from her engagement and allow her to go abroad. But his disposition happened to be of a contrary nature, and she had nothing for it but to bear her situation with philosophy.

Devoured with curiosity, however, as to

the how and why of the whole proceeding, and full of anxiety also regarding Mary's feelings on the subject, she in a few days went to call on Mrs. Lyndsay, and without much difficulty drew from her all she knew.

"Refused him, you don't mean that Mary refused him!" she screamed, when Mrs. Lyndsay revealed this fact.

"Oh! yes, indeed, she did," said Mrs. Lyndsay, fretfully, for it was a subject on which she could not feel resigned. "It was very vexing, and how Mary could think of such a thing I am sure I can't tell. But I always shall say it was his own fault. He came after her too soon, before it was proper to be thinking of such things. Why, I am sure I had hardly begun to think myself. Poor Mr. Merivale had only been two months dead

when he came. To be sure he had waited a long while, poor young man, and I didn't wonder at him; but still it was not the thing; and if he had been pleased to ask my advice, so I should have told him. But it seems to me that people don't think so much of what is proper now-a-days. Everybody does just as they like; and so that was the end of the whole business."

"Refused him!" repeated Mrs. Clifton, paying little heed to Mrs. Lyndsay's words. "Wonderful woman!"

She soon afterwards saw Mary, and endeavoured to read in her face whether she might speak on the subject. But there was no invitation to an approach to it on Mary's side. She was very thankful for Alan's marriage; but the thoughts connected with him lay too deep for familiar

speech ; almost too deep for her willingly to stir them up by reflecting on them in herself.

Mrs. Clifton was not, however, endowed with the gift of silence or reticence, and feeling that some mention of the subject must be made, or she should die with the effort to restrain it, she one day looked at Mary with an inquiring peculiar look, and said—"Are you happy, Mary?"

A faint blush tinged Mary's cheek, and she said:—

"I know what you mean, Mrs. Clifton. My mother told me you had been asking about it. Yes, I am glad, and thankful that he is married."

"But, oh, Mary!" cried her indiscreet friend, as once before, in old days, she had done, "what happiness you have thrown

away! Was it wise, was it right to do it? Is there so much love and happiness in the world, that man himself should refuse what God places before him?"

"Between us two," Mary said, in a low, grave voice, "there was a great gulf fixed. None can know it but ourselves. But we know it; yes, *he* knows it too."

"Oh! Mary, did he?"

"He knows it now. Dear Mrs. Clifton, let us speak of this no more. You ask me if I am happy. I am. Human nature may have moments of weakness, but believe me, when I say that if it was to do again, or a thousand times over, I should never be tempted to act otherwise than as I have done."

It was not to be expected that Mrs. Clifton could fully enter into Mary's mind.

She still felt a regret for the loss of an earthly happiness which higher thoughts could not efface. But though she could not understand, she could admire what was above her comprehension, and she followed Mary's footsteps in life with a reverence and affection which no other character had ever excited in her breast.

Nor could she, as time passed on, deny that a peculiar blessing of peace seemed to rest on Mary's home, nor could she gaze on her sweet serene face, and fancy that the mind within was agitated by vain regrets.

Mary indeed was, as she said, happy. There was enough in her home to fill the deep places of her heart, and without her home there was enough to call forth her pity, and kindness, and charity, those kindly affections which were mingled with the very springs of her life. Rich and

poor, young and old, sick and well, all around her, looked to her for help, and sympathy, and comfort. When the eye saw her, when the ear heard her, then it blessed her. The blessing of her that was ready to perish came upon her, and she caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

And Mary, looking back on her life, ceased not to say—"Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all my days."

THE END.

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